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ABSTRACT

Leadership that plans strategically can initiate the changes most likely to improve public education. The first section of this book is an introduction focusing on the need for leadership and a statement of philosophy on educational change. The next section discusses the four kinds of change affecting public education: (1) the upheaval in the demographics of this country; (2) implications of the transition in the economic base of the United States; (3) the transformation of mainstream values; and (4) competition in the free market worldwide. The third section defines strategic planning as the total concentration of the organization's resources on mutually predetermined measurable outcomes. In the fourth section the stretegic planning discipline model is described. Lastly, an analysis of the methods and the sequence of planning activities is provided. Appended is a list of roles people play, a cost-benefit analysis guide, a job performance standards chart, and an author profile. (SI)

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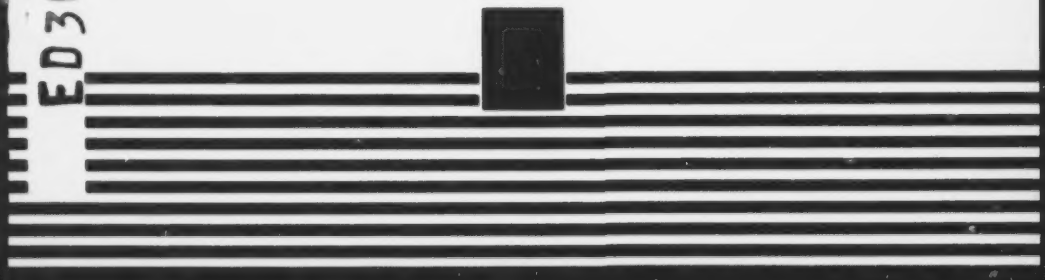

Strategic Planning

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BILL COOK's

Strategic Planning

for
America's Schools

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Section I
Toward a Philosophy of Planning

A Question of Planning

Sir Winston Churchill observed that the process of all human and natural events works somewhat like a formula:

PAST x PRESENT = FUTURE

That is to say, the past as it conflicts with the present produces the future.

Maybe so.

But there is another possibility. Suppose the proposition is stated in this fashion:

PAST x FUTURE = PRESENT

Does it make a difference? The answer is a double affirmative.

How Things Happen

First, it makes a difference in our perception of *how* things happen. The first view is that of the historian. Essentially, it holds that whatever happens is, at best, the result of coincidence; at worst, accident. The emphasis is on holding together the past with

the present; on interpreting the past through the present; and on finding some logical, sequential connection, if not evolution, in the events of the past to the circumstances of the present. That assimilation when it is projected systematically forward becomes the future. Such a rationale is the basis of the theory of natural selection, the Hegelian dialectic, *Megatrends*, The Dow Jones, and "Management By Objectives" as practiced by most American companies.

The second view is that of the futurist. It sees the future not as an accident or coincidence, but as the result of events and actions, which, in their own present time, had intrinsic purpose beyond themselves. The future actually casts its shadow backward, and is realized gradually in the present — albeit never completely. The present thus becomes the eternal quest of the future. In a real sense, the present is nothing but the future chasing itself. That means that the true futurist recognizes that the future is always realized, intentionally or not, in the present tense. It's never postponed. Emphasis is on the here and now; on today's achievement. That is the philosophy underlying most western religions, Manifest Destiny, the American space program, capitalism, and "Management By Results" as preached by Peter Drucker, *et al.*

Why Things Happen

Second, it makes a difference in our conception of *why* things happen. The historian's formula recognizes cause and effect relationships but concentrates primarily on the effects. Events become the result of the vagaries of luck; fate; chance; and, from time to time, magic — all combined with the whims and follies of humankind and the phenomena and quirks of nature. Because there is no control, planning — or, for that matter, hope — is rendered irrelevant. The only choice is no choice. The only action possible is reaction; and response is ultimately translated into the wringing of hands or the beating on of pans in desert places. This notion is the basic presupposition of behaviorism, most Eastern religions, governmental bureaucracy, *laissez-faire* economics, and "Management By Walking Around," as it occurred to Tom Peters.

On the other hand, the futurist's formula places the emphasis on cause rather than effect. It holds that, although some things themselves are beyond control, none of those things control people who choose to design and build according to their own purpose. The future is thus shaped, molded, created by the genius of human invention. For that reason, emphasis is on objective standards by which progress can be

measured, with corresponding measurement being made of each factor and person contributing to the progress. This is the fundamental premise of medical science, free enterprise, military campaigns, competitive sports, and strategic planning as practiced early on by Moses.

The True Futurist vs. the Pop Futurist

The strategic planner is by definition a futurist — a true futurist. Please understand, the strategic planner is not a "pop" futurist — that strange breed of prophet *cum* charlatan that has dominated the quasi-intellectual circles in recent years and, regrettably, seems now to be exerting perilous influence even on legitimate planners. Evidently, "pop" futurism is becoming for the decade of the nineties just another faddish dalliance such as the "pop" sociology of the sixties (*The Catcher in the Rye*); "pop" psychology of the seventies (*I'm OK; You're OK*); and "pop" management of the early eighties (*The One Minute Manager*). To be sure, the prophecies about the year 2000 and beyond are usually entertaining and quite often very persuasive, providing amazingly minute detail of that brave new world: a global econocomputerelectroni-kinetecologistic egalitacracy known mostly for its swinging lifestyles

and swaying demographics. These are the optimistic prophecies. Others, the proverbial prophets of doom, gallop wildly about on the four horses of the Apocalypse and scare the living hell out of people.

Both kinds of "pop" futurists are dangerous because of the insinuation — if not actual declaration — they make about the relationship people, organizations, and institutions bear to their future. There are two primary dangers arising from "pop" futurism, and both are exactly counter in principle to even the idea of strategic planning. The first danger is that prophecies of any kind have a way of becoming self-fulfilling. That is to say, any notion, no matter how far-fetched, if accepted through general familiarity, soon is allowed to become a present reality. Other possibilities, hypotheses, options are never considered. Creation and challenge give way to acquiescence. It is that rationale which discourages planning of any kind. After all, *que sera sera*.

The second danger is that the person is negated as a potential change-agent. Things happen in and of themselves; therefore, the proper role for human beings is one of either mere behavioral response or detached philosophical observation. That is why the "pop" futurists urge "preparation *for* the future," rather than "preparation *of* the future." It is this rationale that has

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typically attempted something called "long-range planing," which was usually nothing more than a collection of SWAG projections accompanied by some SWAG reactions. In this kind of "planning," there is never any hint of control over outcomes — certainly not over the future.

In effect, the "pop" futurist is a historian quite in reverse, recording the future as a *fait accompli*. The basic difference between the historian and the "pop" futurist is that one concocts facts from guess and supposition; the other embellishes guess and supposition with facts. But the strategic planner — the true futurist — believes that the future is yet to be made, and that it will be exactly what people make it. Ironically, by acting on this simple belief, the strategic planner creates history.

A Case in Point

Recently, the American Association of School Administrators published what is at once both the most succinct and the most comprehensive list of prophecies about the schools of the future. This matter-of-fact description of the future seems to represent the state-of-the-art thinking among educational leaders. The twelve predictions for the future of the nation's schools include:

1. As standards rise, schools will be expected to develop individual education for all students. The effect of the standards will be monitored not only in terms of student success but also in terms of dropout rates and equity concerns. Schools will try to identify student problems during the first six weeks of the school year and provide immediate counseling as needed to help students succeed.
2. Teachers and other educators will achieve greater status in society as education is further recognized as basic to a strong economy, a sound defense, and a viable competitive position among the nations of the world. As schools are seen as the basic building block of society, teachers and other educators will receive salaries on a par with other professionals. Equity and parity will be addressed as basic to any merit pay system.
3. Teacher performance will be more closely supervised, and evaluation systems will become more effective.
4. Schools will offer more courses, including advanced information and skills, since many future jobs may not require a four-year college degree.
5. Schools will provide, or serve as sites, for the retraining and education of an increasing number of adults as many

jobs become obsolete every 5 to 10 years.

6. Businesses will provide schools with up-to-date equipment and assistance as they further realize that well-educated people are basic to their success.
7. Teacher certification standards will be monitored to allow only people with specific knowledge and skills to teach in schools.
8. The proportion of minority students in the schools will increase dramatically. Schools will be expected to provide education and training to help these students become contributing members of society. Language skills, dropout concerns, teacher training, parent/citizen involvement, and high expectations will accompany this trend, and schools must deal effectively with each.
9. Educators will work to convince employers that students from urban/inner city schools can perform as well as other students.
10. Teachers will develop and schools will demand better educational software that will enhance or replace textbooks.
11. Schools will become even more involved politically in making legislators and governors more knowledgeable about education.

12. Schools will seek alternative methods of financing which will increase the challenge of providing equal educational opportunity.

Impressive? Yes. Logical? Yes. Accurate? Maybe. It all depends on whether current educational leaders choose to be *causes* or *effects* — strategic planners or long-range planners — futurists or "pop" futurists.

The Case of Strategic Planning In Education

The recent groundswell of interest in planning among professional educators is a clear indication that strategic planning is an idea whose time has come in public education. Exactly why, it is difficult to say; other than it seems within the past several months many factors have combined to create major concerns at every level about the very nature and purpose of public education in this country. The Presidential Commission's report, *A Nation At Risk;* the Carnegie Commission's report; the National Governors' Association's *Time for Results;* the negative impact of teacher strikes and fights over merit pay; the unsettled question about the accountability of educators and the achievement of students; declining tax bases; the continuing white

flight to private schools; teacher shortages; adverse federal policies that curtail funding; community splits over special interests; bureaucratic state departments of education; politically dominated local boards; inept school administration; and court orders that have nothing to do with education — all seem to have combined into a quiet crescendo of confusion and doubt even among the very best educational leaders. One veteran superintendent lamented at a recent national meeting, "We don't know who we are anymore." While that remark is probably an admission more of frustration than failure, it is profoundly significant because it is evidence of a general frustration among professional educators.

The seriousness of that frustration needs no elaboration. It is no overstatement to say that the mere thought that public education has lost its way threatens the very existence of the nation. The Jewish prophet Hosea said it best: "Without knowledge, the people perish." The simple fact is that a democratic society cannot exist without an effective system of universal public education: The first requirement for self-governance is an enlightened citizenry capable of governing themselves.

The Trauma of Change

But there is more. There are at least four other universal factors that further threaten public education. But these factors, inescapable as they are, overwhelming as they seem, carry within themselves possibly the only opportunity for the salvation of the American system of public education — if, that is, educational leaders choose now to create a future worthy of their heritage and equal to the nation's potential.

These factors taken together account for — and, in fact, constitute — the unprecedented change that has happened in every aspect of American life in the past few years. That traumatic change has forced concentration on the future because, suddenly, the future is now. One college president, who himself is a true futurist (he initiated the "new college" concept), has observed that within the space of two years, 1985-87, more change occurred in the way Americans live and do business than was wrought by the entire industrial revolution. Paradoxically, this historic change was almost exclusively the direct result of modern education systems. Yet, at the same time, because of the profoundness of the change, most existing education systems were rendered, if not obsolete, at least seriously deficient in their ability to prepare students for the twenty-first century; or,

perhaps more pertinent, in serving educationally all citizens under all circumstances in both the present and future.

These change factors have been well publicized by "pop" management and "pop" futurist writers; but most have ignored the present and, therefore, the future, implications for public education. Specifically, the changes most affecting public education — both as threat and opportunity — are (1) unprecedented demographic shifts and reformations; (2) the recent transitions of the nation's economy from agriculture and manufacturing to information, and now to bio-genetics; (3) the corresponding transitions in mainstream personal values, and (4) the intensification of global competition and the consequent redefinition of excellence. (These changes are discussed fully in Section III.)

The Need for Leadership

The conclusion of all this is simple. Whether these factors become curses or blessings will be determined by one thing and one thing only — local leadership. What is needed is not the type of phony leadership that relies on the power of position, the political savvy of the boardroom, or the sleight-of-hand of inconsequential studies, surveys, and reports. But this lead-

ership must be the kind that is based on deep conviction and clarity of purpose; that courageously chooses from a variety of likely options a definite course of action and concentrates all effort on specific goals; that insists on measuring progress toward those goals by present results; and that inspires others to follow.

In short, it's the kind of leadership that plans strategically. After all, a leader is just someone who gets to the future before anyone else; and his or her greatness is measured by the time of his or her arrival and the number of people who followed.

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Section II
The Urgency of Change

There are four kinds of change irresistibly and traumatically affecting public education in America. In fact, taken together, these forces amount to a literal *crisis*.

By now, these changes are not new. They have been touted and lamented in essay, conference, and video cassette since the early nineteen eighties. And yet their implications are still not fully understood. What understanding there is, is mostly intellectual titillation without any emotional grasp of the urgency of the circumstances.

Demographics

The first change is the unprecedented upheaval in the demographics of this country. While almost every commonly recognized demographic factor is involved, there are three that have primary significance for education: the aging of the population; the diversification of the family unit; and the transition from a nation *with* minorities to a nation *of* minorities.

The Aging Population

The first factor is the aging of the population. Facts acclaiming the "graying" of America are so familiar that they have become cliches. For example:

- By 2000, the median age will be 36.3
- By 2000, 50 percent of the labor force will be over 40
- Every 10 years, the number of people over 85 doubles
- By 2050, there will be 1 million people in this country over 100
- Two-thirds of school patrons are "empty-nesters"
- By 2000, 32 million citizens will be over 65 years old.

The first, and most popular, interpretation of these predictive trends is purely economic. And well it should be. Almost every issue before Congress for the past three sessions has somehow involved the emerging conflict between the "Grumpies" and the "Yuppies." One can better appreciate the poignancy of the tug-of-war when it is understood that in 1956 there were seventeen workers for each person on social security, compared with the projected ratio for the year 2000 of three to one.

Adding an ironic dimension to this struggle is the fact that seventy percent of the wealth of this country is controlled by people over fifty-five. At least one demog-

rapher has noted the recent dramatic growth in a heretofore unheard of group, the "Sippies" (Senior Independent Pioneers); that is, those people who rode the inflationary spiral of the sixties and seventies to considerable wealth, cashed out their $30,000 houses for $300,000, and moved to West Palm.

When educators discuss the aging of the society, invariably the focus of their attention is the alleged decline of support for public education from "empty-nesters." The fact is that already seventy percent of the schools' constituencies are older people without children at home. Yet state and local funding for education in this country still exceeds by far that in any other nation — even Japan, where education is the national priority.

Perhaps that helps explain all the hue and cry in recent years for both excellence and accountability in our public schools? Much of that pressure is coming from people old enough to remember public education of an earlier time and mature enough to realize the consequences of anything less than the best. If their support is not immediately forthcoming, it may mean that they do not oppose public education, but instead are disappointed with what, in their perception, it has become.

Beyond economic support, the aging population presents at least two significant

windfalls for education. In the first instance, the fact that people are living longer means that most — both men and women — will enjoy not one but two (and maybe more) distinct careers over the course of their lifetime. It has been generally acknowledged for years that the average worker changes jobs seven times in a career, but now the prospect is for completely different progressive careers. Traditionally, it was supposed public education existed to prepare a student for a productive career, sometimes via higher education or technical or professional training. But what if one must prepare for at least two careers — one through the traditional K-12 programs; the other through whatever might evolve from non-traditional curricula or current adult and continuing education programs?

It is a moot point to argue whether public education exists to support a national agenda or to satisfy individual needs. The simple fact is that ultimately both will be served, and ultimately through public programs designed to prepare students of all ages for primary, secondary, and even tertiary careers. This alone has the potential of completely changing the function of public education or of relegating it to a minor role in the lifelong education of the person.

In the second instance, more and more school districts are discovering the virtually

unlimited opportunity for cooperative, mutually beneficial activities between the schools and the older citizens of the district.

The upshot of all the statistics dealing with the aging population is that public education must make some decisions rather quickly about what it is — and will be. Eventually, what it becomes will be a matter of choice — not chance.

The Restructuring of the Family

The second great change factor posing both threats and opportunity for America's public schools is the restructuring of the family. This fact comes as no surprise, but most of the implications have yet to be realized. "Restructuring" is actually an understatement. In 1955, sixty percent of the families in this country consisted of a father, mother, and two children; today, that "typical" nuclear family of four amounts to only seven percent. In fact, the Internal Revenue Service recognizes at least thirteen variations of the family.

There is a whole litany of facts and predictions about the family and family life that, taken together or separately, offer convincing evidence that public education is being forced to deal with the world on its own terms.

For example:

- Sixty percent of children born today will live with one parent
- There are over nine million single family heads of households, and fifty percent of them receive no financial support from the fathers of their children
- Each day forty teenage girls give birth to their third child — many by choice.

All of these statistics are but cold recitations until they appear in the classroom in the form of substance abuse, emotional disturbances, behavior problems, health crises, and sexual irresponsibility — all to say nothing of the basic needs for nutrition and safety. For example, the mere fact, startling as it is, that there is no cure for AIDS and that the nation is in an epidemic compels emergency attention for sex education starting as early as the elementary grades. The question, as with all the other concerns, is who will provide the instruction or service.

Suddenly, the old phrase *in loco parentis* has gained real meaning. During the past two decades every conceivable social and legal responsibility has been sloughed off on the schools; and educators, by their benevolent nature, continue to say "yes" to any and all demands placed upon them by other institutions in a state of deterioration and malaise. The result is that public edu-

cation seems now so besotted with gratuitous functions, some conflicting, that it cannot clearly distinguish its primary mission, or so encumbered with the negligence of others that it cannot energize itself to make its own way. But like nothing else, the change in the family structure will demand a resolution from the schools.

Sooner or later, public education must either declare its magnanimous intent and omnipotent ability to serve as surrogate family or begin to draw fine lines of distinction between possibility and impossibility, between what is the proper role of public schools and what is not. Such focusing may indeed be essential if public education is to achieve the concentration of effort and resources necessary to achieve excellence.

The Emerging of Minorities

The third major change factor with which public education must deal straightaway is the emergence of a diverse and, in many areas, dominant minority population. The United States is rapidly becoming a nation of minorities:

- One-fourth of all students currently in public schools are minorities; in the year 2000, minorities will constitute one-third of the student population.
- By 2000, over half the students in fifty-

three American cities will be from minority groups.

Quite obviously, there are too many implications of this development to discuss here, but three considerations seem to loom above all the others, especially from the standpoint of public education. The first is the very basic question of language. The whole business of educating *(educare)* presupposes communication; and communication presupposes a common medium. The issue has already produced all sorts of gyrations, quirks, and general craziness in local language curricula as well as legislative mandates.

In a more serious if not more responsible vein, already one-third of the States have moved to make English their official language, and momentum now seems to be sufficient to achieve national adoption. The primary motivational force behind such a move is more than majority dominance, Anglo pride, or mere convenience. It is the realization that a common language is the one essential bond of any nation, if that nation is to be identified by more than geographical boundaries: A common language is basic to any culture.

Second, there is the generally acknowledged but inevitable conflict of values, not the least of which is the challenge to the value of formal education itself in the life of the individual. What has for generations

been held by mainstream America as the primary means for achieving the American dream has little meaning for those who for whatever reason do not or cannot share that dream. There is fundamental and unyielding resistance to an imposed discipline of learning whose only promise is that which is either irrelevant or unachievable, and whose consequences provide little immediate gratification. The implications of this conflict in values are broad indeed, ranging from the appalling dropout rates in schools and attendant delinquency and joblessness to the nation's long-term economic security, and even to the very question of a democracy being able to sustain itself through an "enlightened" citizenry.

Third, there is the emergence of the "mosaic" phenomenon which is simply the reverse of the old "melting pot" theory. In quite dramatic ways, *amalgamation* is being superceded by *consolidation*. Racial, ethnic, and cultural identities are being not only celebrated but cultivated with a non-combative egotism generally foreign to the American experience. It is a matter of pride arising from the distinction of uniqueness within a diversity that obscures values. It is also a matter of the security found in the familiar within a diversity that is sometimes unmanageable.

All this means that public education faces a future in which there is bound to be

a dramatic shift in the delicate balance that exists between the values and interests of the various groups and those more readily identified with the broader society, with the advantage being held by the groups.

The first question thus posed to public education is three-fold: whether it will be adaptive or creative in the transition; or will it founder in optimistic futility waiting for things to settle; or will it actually provide stability through bold leadership committed to a visionary kind of national synergy (or, as someone once said: *e pluribus unum).*

The second question regards the validity of localized educational programs as opposed to national mandates and agendas. Sooner or later the diversification of America is going to force education to come down on one side or the other. Simply stated, the necessity to address local concerns and student needs must be weighed against national mandates that in attempting to deal with the needs of all achieve little for anyone. It would be considerably more ennobling if that decision were made out of conviction and implemented with courage.

The most serious social problem facing the nation's schools, if not the nation itself, is: How can the educational system accentuate the richness of cultural diversity while at the same time honoring and preserving traditional American values?

Redefining "Public" Education

It is manifestly evident that these three unprecedented demographic phenomena alone — aging, family structure, and minority population — are enough to demand unprecedented fundamental changes in America's system of public education. Mere superficial changes in the way schools conduct their business are pathetic, verging on tragic; what is required is a fundamental change in the business itself.

Economic Transitions

The second great change that inexorably has become both the impetus and substance of strategic planning is the unprecedented transition in the economic base of the United States, if not the world. This change, although at first gradual and always progressive, even predictable during the past 150 years or so, in the late 1970's began to compound itself in both its implications and its velocity, resulting in continuing economic instability and confusion and, in some instances, outright desperation. The effects have been felt alike by governments, corporations, families, schools, and individuals.

The book *Megatrends* introduced us to something called the "age of information"

and generalized the historical transitions in the economy of America. The fundamental concepts are both accurate and intriguing; but the most significant issues involved in these transitions are yet to be fully realized, even by historians — to say nothing of futurists.

The basic approach holds that "ages" or "eras" are characterized in terms of what the majority of the nation's population does to make a living. So, the thesis goes, as late as the middle nineteenth century, about seventy percent of Americans were involved in agriculture as their primary source of income. The "agricultural" or "agrarian" age historically extends all the way back to pre-civilization, even to the beginning of the human race. That means, as a conservative estimate, that the "agricultural age" is about 25,000 years old. In 1987, only about 2.5 percent of Americans made a living farming; and that percentage continues to decline.

The shift from agriculture came with the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. It is not generally noted, but in America the movement into and through the "industrial age" came over a period of at least ninety years — from 1860 to 1950 — and occurred in three approximately thirty-year increments. The first was that of *private industrialization,* characterized by the entrepreneurial industrialists of the middle

and late 1800's. The second was that of *corporate industrialization,* characterized by corporate enterprise — as opposed to purely free enterprise. Corporate industrialization ran its course with the stock market crash of 1929, and with the consequent intrusion of government aided and abetted by both the national war effort in the late thirties and even forties and the increasingly liberal social philosophy of the nation. The third was *government industrialization* which manifested itself in the "military-industrial complex" as well as in a complicated economic interrelationship between the federal government and all corporations. The last great surge of *government industrialization* came in the frantic rush into outer space in the ten years immediately following the Sputnik surprise, and the economic interrelationship between government was further tangled by civil rights and other social issues ranging from worker safety to redistribution of wealth.

It was not until the late seventies that the nation realized that yet another economic transition had occurred, taking the government, industry, and everybody else quite by surprise. According to the popular notion of the time, as proclaimed in a variety of pop-futuristic publications, the nation, if not the world, had suddenly been thrust into the "age of information." The experts know that because, by their count, sixty-

five to seventy percent of the population was making a living in so-called "information" industries.

Actually, the "age of information," an apt description for the time, did not break out as suddenly as most observers seem to think. The transition from the "industrial age" to the "age of information" actually occurred over a period of at least thirty years, and in identifiable increments of roughly ten years each. The first — from the late fifties until the mid-to-late sixties — is best described as *The Discovery of Ideas;* the second — from the late sixties through the mid-seventies — was a time in which *The Awareness of Ideas* was the nation's chief attraction and, in some cases, distraction. It was not until the late seventies that *The Assimilation of Ideas* manifested itself in attempts at forming networks and linkages to connect all the accumulated and erstwhile relatively independent ideas into usable communities of information. That is when America discovered "the age of information."

In many ways America's discovery of the age of information was quite fortunate, if not predictable, because other factors of the seventies combined to pose an insurmountable threat to industrialism: the oil "shortage," emerging second and third world markets and dramatic increases in industrial production in these countries,

and governmental machinations in world economies. So the much heralded "information and service age" might not have been so much a real advance in the economic scheme of things, but the only available alternative at the moment. Unfortunately the alternative now seems to have been limited by both time and substance. The plight of the laid-off steelworker — an artisan who drove a cab until he could return to work at the mill — is a fitting analogy to the predicament of an entire nation.

The ancient Greeks had a *persona* for just about everything imaginable. Their unfortunate, chauvinistic idea of "opportunity" was a nude woman wearing woolen boots and completely bald save for a single lock of hair growing tuft-like just over her forehead (hence the expression, "seize the opportunity by the forelock"). Opportunity not thus seized becomes a tragedy of loss, and so it was with the rapid, unprecedented shift of the economy. The first shock was felt in local and industrial economies. The national unemployment rate soared to almost twelve percent, and entire communities, built around single industries, were devastated. Even eight years later, the national unemployment rate still hovered around seven percent (almost twice that of the industrial age); and in some areas such as Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, entire communities still were ravaged by up-

wards of fifty-percent unemployment. If not typical, at least indicative of the profound subsidence in the economic base of the nation is one mining town in West Virginia which in 1987 still was suffering from 95 percent unemployment.

All the classical economists since Adam Smith have insisted that there are only three sources of wealth: *agriculture, mining,* and *manufacturing* (sometimes *fishing* is added as a fourth category, but usually it is subsumed under agriculture). Any other human enterprise merely shifts around the wealth, variously represented from time to time by something called money. The problem is that shifting money, while it accumulates more money at the point of shifting, sadly does not create wealth. Debtor nations like the U.S. would do well to remember that; and those people, businesses, and nations who stake their economic security on enterprises in information and services will eventually discover that their economy and their security depend on wealth producers. Emphasis on wealth-producing activities is especially critical in a period of massive resettlement of the earth's economic plates.

Beyond Economic Transitions

Far transcending the more historical process of these basic economic transitions,

and ultimately more significant than the substance of the transitions themselves, are the implications thereof, implications that are as pervasive as they are radical. Almost all of these will directly affect public education, but there are at least three major issues that, together or alone, will forever change every aspect of education — its structure, content, delivery, even its basic purpose. These are (1) the question of knowledge/information manageability; (2) the inevitable emergence of an information/knowledge-based caste order; and (3) the trauma of total-system obsolescence.

The Management of Information

First, information/knowledge management. The great knowledge explosion of this century, because of its hyper-popularization through management seminars and television commercials, has become generally acknowledged as one of the conundrums of the age — so generally acknowledged, in fact, that acknowledgment has turned to acceptance, and acceptance to ambivalence. Unfortunately, in this case, ambivalence is tantamount to catastrophe. Nuclear energy comes immediately to mind.

Any extensive recantation of the enormity of this issue would fail in the attempt.

So, ironically, it might best be understood in terms of a simple paradigm that, admittedly, is more anecdote than argument. Originating in the synthetic sixties, it held rather starkly that the universal body of human knowledge had doubled in ever-diminishing intervals, to wit:

From 4 B.C. to A.D. 1900
From 1900 to 1950
From 1950 to 1960
From 1960 to 1965
And thus each three years.

One of the yet unexplained mysteries of the age is that even in view of this astounding accumulation of knowledge, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, during that decade of fantasy, was determined to get it all between the covers of something called a "syntopticon," sold, of course, by subscription — proof positive that human knowledge is exceeded only by human folly. All that provokes an extended pause for thought, because now the updated paradigm estimates that knowledge doubles every eighteen months. That is why syntopticons and their ilk have lately given way to pocket-sized laser discs — revised, one must suppose, sesquiannually.

It is not surprising that the modern technocrats — who, by marvelously omniscient machines, collect, collate, sort, and otherwise "process" this knowledge and information in all its various forms — still do not

really understand the meaning of "information management." Intent as they are either on making and selling "hardware" and "software" or on personally self-actualizing as a career "computer expert," all their systems and applications are but a superficial, albeit profitable and convenient, feint at management of information. The basic problem is that, so far, computers and the like have been used to formalize, perhaps even fossilize, traditional thinking processes, not to engender new ones.

What a chance missed! With the advent of the computer, for the first time in history the human mind was freed from the drudgery of menial intellectual exercise; but rather than seizing the opportunity to explore the vast and indescribable capacities of the mind, the entire race gleefully set about deifying predictability and conformity in thinking by something called "state-of-the-art." It is doubly ironic that even the so-called "critical thinking" taught by most schools is programmed. The mere programming thwarts real thinking; simply responding to options is not always thinking. Furthermore, critical thinking is essentially a matter of judgment, and judgment is essentialy a matter of values. Programmed values are anti-thought. The phrase itself is a classic oxymoron. Nevertheless it is still encouraging to know that schools of the 1980's are at least recognizing the possibil-

ity of expanding the human interest through any form of so-called "critical thinking."

However, effective and progressive education of the 1990's will concentrate not on critical thinking skills, but on *creative* thinking. That dimension of the human intellect is a force very possibly without limit. That kind of creativity is generally shied away from because it cannot be managed at all in traditional ways. And the mere mention of the higher psychic powers of the mind is heresy among the computer orthodoxy and the traditionalists in education.

Sooner or later, however, someone is going to realize that the most critical issue of the early twenty-first century is not war and peace, nor famine, nor the environment, nor poverty, nor anything the world troubles itself with now. The one critical issue is discovering the ultimate function and power of the human mind: That discovery will prove to be the historical equivalent of the discovery of fire. The only thing that can possibly forestall that discovery is the current system of education.

The Polarizing of Society

The second implication of the shifting concern of the nation is the evolution of a

new caste system within the American, perhaps global, society based strictly on "knowing." Knowledge — the great equalizer — quickly becomes the great denominator, separating the society into classes distinguishable not by birth or rank, but by intellectual acumen. While the various classes and, therefore, the lines between them may be imprecise or obscure, the extremes of the continuum are alarmingly visible and grow farther apart with every new discovery or new idea. Already, the terms "elite" and "underclass" have been accepted with poignant new meaning into the vernacular.

Professional and academic degrees — M.D., M.B.A., J.D., and Ph.D. — are the peerage of the American social order. This elitism is vaguely reminiscent of the intelligentsia of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe and, even more remarkable, of the Greek Gnosticism of the first and second century. The result is a broad range of contemporary and future social, political, and economic consequences.

For example, the primary social issue deriving from the circumstances involves the single most fundamental ingredient of society itself — that is, a core of common values. No social unit — community, corporation, tribe, state, or nation — no matter the size, can exist without the bonding provided by a common value system. A culture

is merely a collection of values. Values and value systems are of two kinds: Those that derive from *conviction* (religion, superstition, codes of honor, etcetera) and those that derive from *need* (a la Abraham Maslow). In most societies, these two kinds of values interact to produce practical rules of personal behavior and individual responsibility. Sometimes the product of that interaction is referred to as "ethics." Quite obviously a community dichotomized by ignorance and knowledge will not share the same convictions nor will it collectively perceive the same needs; and, therefore, it cannot identify either its cultural benchmarks or its ethical reference points. Ignorance and knowledge simply cannot produce the same values. And such basic conflict within the society can only erode its moral synergy and lead ultimately to the deterioration of the society.

The primary political issue deriving from this circumstance strikes at the heart of a democratic form of government. Plato observed that a democracy would fail only when its citizens discovered that they could vote for themselves anything they wanted. Democracy presupposes an "enlightened citizenry" — people who are, in fact, knowledgeable and prudent and disciplined. There is a fine line between a democracy and anarchy. America seems lately — during the past three decades — to have in-

vented a malevolent hybrid in a kind of "politicized anarchy" in which special interests override laws and governmental procedures. All special interest groups thrive on the manipulation of both the populace and political systems through misinformation and disinformation — more specifically, by making and controlling knowledge.

This situation, of course, is based on the assumption that all segments of the society have full participation in the political process, as they supposedly have in present-day America. But without that, there is a danger even greater than self-destruction. The simple fact is that, ultimately, those citizens who lack the knowledge necessary to participate effectively in self-governance run the risk of being disenfranchised, *de facto*, if not *de jure*. After all, knowledge is power. And, in either case, there emerges a ruling class — the elite, the cognoscenti. Suppression, if not oppression, of the service classes is a natural consequence.

The conclusion of the matter is this: A democracy cannot exist without effective public education — an educational system that ameliorates the extremes, reconciles all those differences within society that are irreconcilable without a common base and level of knowledge.

Finally, the fundamental economic issue deriving from this circumstance is the question of individual economic status:

whether economic dependency or economic self-sufficiency. Unlike earlier times, in the modern world, *gnosis* and *intelligence* translate almost invariably into material well-being; and as the extremes of knowledge grow farther apart, the wealth of nations is posited evermore toward the knowledge end of the spectrum. The resulting severe trauma is realized in at least three ways.

First, and most obvious, is the wide variance in the *quality of life* that can be experienced at the extremes. While in one case luxury becomes a necessity, in the other merely satisfying necessity is a luxury. This simple conflict has been the precipitant of most Western revolutions, tomes of political theory, and the crux of liberal economic ideology of the twentieth century. Yet, despite the enduring, incalculable effort to politically redistribute wealth, poverty and wealth are constantly redefining each other. The simple fact is that there are no political solutions to economic problems. It is almost a paradox: The economic balances of any society drive its politics; but, ultimately, politics — especially in a democracy — cannot drive its economic balances. It seems the laws of wealth are not subject to the laws of men. Suddenly, economic and political reality, as well as basic reality, demands that any consideration of any value of anything be superceded by the

assertion of the value of life — all life.

Second, there is the simple yet explosive matter of *economic rule.* The old quip that "he who has the gold, rules" is more fact than facetious. Somehow, one suspects, that is true even in a democratic society whose majority is fully franchised and politically active, although uneducated and impoverished. To be more specific, there can be no political freedom without economic self-sufficiency. In twenty-first century America, this implicit conflict far transcends the age-old struggle between master and slave, lord and serf, owner and employee. At issue here is the tense relationship between democracy and capitalism and whether that unique American symbiosis can be sustained. The answer depends on only one thing: that is, the degree to which that socioeconomic relationship allows for individual self-sufficiency (and the attending self-direction) — not as a patronizing entitlement — but as a result of discretionary individual effort justly rewarded.

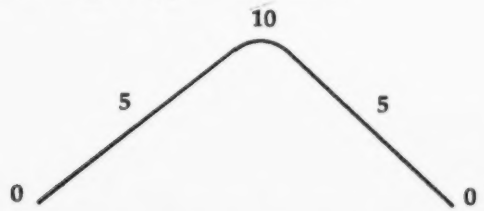
Third, and intensely human, there is the matter of individual *life-control;* that is, the ability to effectively manage one's own life. While it is true that personal happiness does not derive directly from economic advantage, it is clear that economic disadvantage most often severely restricts higher aspirations and dramatically curtails individual

achievement. As the economic chasm widens, the society is thus inevitably separated into two groups: those who live with hope and those who live in despair. With hope, because they have the privilege of choice; in despair, because they have no apparent options. With hope, because they can exercise reasonable control over their own destiny; in despair, because they depend strictly on luck, fate, chance, and magic. That such widespread abject hopelessness could occur in a society that has recognized, even extolled, education as the one great source of hope is not as much an indictment of education as of that society itself — and its hope.

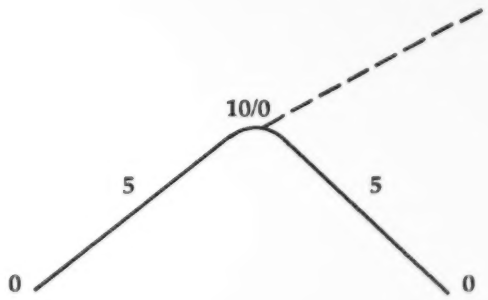
System Obsolescence

The third implication of the shifting economic base of the nation is the simple and profound principle of obsolescence compounded to total-system-breaking proportions. It is as simple as paper being replaced by screens, parchment being replaced by paper, papyrus being replaced by parchment, bark and tables of stone being replaced by papyrus — all variations of systematized symbolic human communication. It is as profound as communication in both inner and outer space through electronic impulses — totally different in kind, a non-symbolic system.

The now commonplace accelerated obsolescence of jobs within blue-chip industries is but a dramatic synecdoche of the industries themselves, because there is a principle at work here larger than any system. In fact, it is a principle inherent within all systems, processes, products, organizations — anything that has been or can be created. It is the irresistible principle of "life-cycle," the inevitable curve of progression/degression between birth and death. Configured and given numerical dimension, it might appear like this:



The subject is born at "0" and, continuing the metaphor, proceeds through infancy, childhood, adolescence — maturing at "10." At that point, it reaches, according to the Greeks, "crisis" — by definition, the point at which the entity gets either much better or much worse. There are no other options. Stability, homeostasis, even continued equilibrium are out of the question. One of two things will happen: First, the "10" may become a new "0" and initiate a whole new life-cycle; or, second, the "10" simply declines to "0." Post-crisis might be depicted like this:



The secret to survival is the recognition of crisis when it occurs. And recognition, surprisingly enough, is a rather simple matter: The sole indicator of crisis in any entity is parity between investment and outcome — the break-even point. If crisis passes unacknowledged, recovery is improbable. The sole indication of obsolescence in a mature entity is unfavorable disparity between investment and outcome; that is, when it costs more to sustain the system than the system is producing — the point of deficit returns.

Perhaps the best current example of this phenomenon (railroads being the classic example) is electrical utilities. Having developed over the years, at great cost, both a system and a mentality for the delivery of electricity, they find it compulsory to transform all kinds of energy — solar, nuclear, thermal, magnetic, wind — into electricity, simply because that is the only kind of energy the system is capable of delivering. It has not occurred to them — or they have

not admitted — that human beings already possess the technology for site-based power generation — energy derived directly from the source. That is why nuclear energy in the hands of electrical utilities will always be an economic disaster. It would be an embarrassment if they had that capacity. Refinements and improvements of the existing system only enlarge the deficit.

That public education in America is at crisis has been declared by every credible witness. Whether crisis has passed remains a debatable question. The Presidential Commission's report *(A Nation At Risk)*, studies by the Carnegie Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the National Governor's Conference, as well as feature editorials in *Forbes, U.S. News & World Report*, and *Newsweek*, and bestsellers such as *The Closing of the American Mind* and *Cultural Literacy*, all testify that there is something urgently and irreparably wrong with the nation's system of public education.

That which is past is past. No one can argue against or disparage the unexcelled accomplishments of public education in this country. It alone is the vehicle — the force -- that has brought Americans to the highest standard of living ever achieved by any nation, any time. And it has been the means by which untold millions of citizens have achieved personal freedom, dignity, and fulfillment. But that which is past is

past.

What is needed — in fact, what must occur — is not a revolution: That would discount and demean all the former triumphs of public education. It is not an evolution: That would require the perpetuation of a system already obsolete. What is needed, rather, is a *metamorphosis* — a total change of form, which presupposes a total change of substance. *Morphe* is absolutely the right word in this context — not *schema*. And therein lies the fundamental difference between this change and the changes of the past. Almost without exception, changes in public education — even those hailed as *avant garde*, modern, or innovative — have, sadly enough, been merely *schematic*, and for that reason superficial. They wrought little or no change of substance. They were merely schemes — variations within a system.

Even the current so-called "reform" movements, loudly heralded by state legislatures, are for the most part simple-minded, politically expedient impositions of future-retardant schemes upon school systems whose obsolescence is guaranteed with every passing law.

If public education is to survive into the next century, it must recreate itself from the inside out: its purpose, its scope, its governance, its curriculum, its funding; the nature of teaching and learning; the meaning of

student achievement; its leadership obligation to the rest of society. Whether it will do that remains to be seen; but, in either case, one thing is certain in the world of life-cycles: Form will always follow substance; it cannot dictate.

The Transformation of Mainstream Values

The third irresistible change affecting American education is the dramatic transformation in individual human values, especially those mainstream values that have emerged since the mid-1980's. That actual mainstream personal values do exist and can be identified is attested to quite pragmatically — sometimes crassly — by national advertising. But value systems are not static. In quite broad historical terms, American mainstream personal values have paralleled the nation's economic transitions and, in fact, have been precipitated by if not derived from the necessary and fundamental dynamics of each successive economic era. That is to say, each economic period of the nation's history was and is accompanied by a corresponding mentality, a mentality that reflects the dynamic of the economic system. That mentality in every case encompasses, among other things, a certain world view, a certain view

of human life, its worth and purpose; a certain view of self and others; a certain concept of roles and functions within a society; a certain philosophy of government; and, not surprisingly, a certain economic ideology.

The recent turn in mainstream values looms especially significant not just because of its immediacy, but because it probably represents a radical departure from — or a reaction to — the previous somewhat evolutionary transformations in personal value systems. If so, this is a change of incalculable proportions. The best evidence that it is a radical departure is the abject failure of corporate and educational organizations to recognize it and adjust to it, and their consequent current demise from unknown causes.

The simplest way to get at this complex phenomenon is to begin with an abbreviated version of a matrix analysis offered by Carolyn Corbin in *Strategies 2000*. This begins to provide insight not only to the progressive nature of the value changes; but also to suggest a wide range of interrelationships, causes, and effects.

Economic Era	Primary Resource	Transforming Agent	Time Orientation (Values)
Agrarian	Land	Natural Energy	Past
Industrial	Capital	Processed Energy	Present
Information	Mind	Knowledge	Future

This chart obviously requires no elaboration, except the column describing the shifts in time orientation. First, there must be acknowledged the basic premise that time orientation is indeed the *fundamental* expression of a value system embracing a total self/world view. Second, there must be an understanding of the relationship between that view and the economic dynamic it parallels. Only then will the values themselves be recognized as the primary driving force behind every other aspect of a person's life; the force sustaining or otherwise confounding corporate exigencies; and, ultimately at a national level, the force behind every major social and political imperative.

Agrarian Values

The agrarian values were and are predicated on the belief that the past is sacred, because the past is the only route to the future. That is, the past is always prologue — the foundation of and the impetus to that which is future. It defines and invents improvement, progress, achievement. That kind of perspective gives a special kind of meaning to all present activity and effort as it inevitably turns into the past. That explains why agrarians were and are the last optimists, believing that by dint of their

own effort today they can create something better tomorrow. And, it is as simple and as fundamental as the dynamic at the heart of the agrarian economic system: Plant today; reap tomorrow.

Over and over, in surveys and interview sessions throughout the nation, those persons with an agrarian mentality, when asked to draw a single line that represents either their lives or human history, draw an inclined plane. That is their basic view of both themselves and the world. And it is an interesting, and perhaps somewhat sobering, thought that it was precisely that value system that was responsible for, among other historic accomplishments, the American system of public education.

By disposition and by desire, agrarians are "builders." And if now they often look to the past in pleas to "return to basics" or even in more radical demands for reform, it is only because, to their great disappointment, the present has not kept faith with the past.

The Values of the Industrial Age

The industrialite mentality is characterized by a monomyopic emphasis on the present — completely void of any notion of either past or future. And this view also derives from the dynamic of the economic

system, quite different from the agrarian dynamic. The vocabulary says it all: If the primary resource is capital (no longer land), then engaging that resource with a transforming agent (not labor but automation and monetarization) becomes an investment (not planting) for the purpose of generating a return (not a harvest). And soon the industrialist learns that the increments of return on investment, since they do not depend on natural cycles, can be shortened by spurring consumption of goods, products, and services.

So the economic dynamic proceeds in stages: (1) the making and selling of goods, products, and services that either are in themselves expendable, or are designed with calculated built-in life expectancies (therefore, the most inspiring word of this dynamic: "now"); (2) the convincing of an otherwise reasonably content but potentially insatiable public that the *summum bonum* is getting and spending (therefore the most sacred religion of this dynamic: "materialism"); (3) the creation of competitive consumption through power advertising that guarantees satisfaction (therefore, the most preferred philosophy of this dynamic: "the one who dies with the most toys wins"); and (4) through raising the very basic activity of foraging to the status of "professional shopping" (therefore, the greatest discovery of the dynamic: "I can

get it for you wholesale").

This dynamic is relentless and never-ending. Labor is transformed into purchasing power, and there is never enough. Work becomes a means, not an end. And there is always too much.

That is the reason people with an industrialite mentality draw their lines and human history as a straight, flat line — dull, boring, redundant, tedious, without purpose, without joy — the very image of the assembly lines and the bureaucratic institutions through which they accumulated an uncontrollable consumer debt. It is ironic that consumers ultimately consume themselves.

The Values of the Age of Information

The mainstream values of the information age represent a convergence of three fundamental experiences inherent in the dynamic of the economy of this era: (1) systems; (2) obsolescence; and (3) globalization. First, the very basic enterprise of this age was the "systematizing" of data or information — "interfacing," "networking," "linking" — all terms ultimately conveying a sense of connection far beyond that simply of "mainframes." It was not so much an altruistic Donnesian notion of the interdependence of humanity as it was an over-

whelming realization that not only is personal well-being inexorably linked to systems surrounding the individual, but also that all human existence does in fact depend upon an indeterminable number of delicate connections in a complex infrastructure called civilization or, more precisely, American civilization.

That system was shattered by the Arab oil embargo of the seventies and the deep recession of the early eighties. The people of the affective "we" generation quickly developed high anxiety when they discovered the acute sensitivity in the ganglia of economic, political, and social connections upon which their lives depended. Unaccustomed to such fragility, they raged about to establish and strengthen systems deemed adequate to guarantee the perpetuation of their world: IRA's and Keoghs, Medicaid, estate planning; Reaganomics and the Moral Majority; the family, fraternity and the country club — all desperate attempts to forestall the disconcerting confusion that occurs when the unfamiliar meets the uncontrollable, when the center can no longer hold, and things fall apart. For the first time in their history, Americans experienced the pall of ambiguity.

Second, beyond the obvious practical obsolescence deriving from the eruptive shift in the economic base during this time, there was a more subtle and greatly fore-

boding certainty of obsolescence in the systems themselves, systems which became outdated even before they were put in place. Paradoxically, the inexhaustible profusion of systems negated the permanence and, therefore, the security heretofore implicit in all systems. Always before, systems had been the primary means of imposing order. Even Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote of the "systems" by which all people order their lives.

But with the information age, all order was subject to constant reordering, rendering all order disorder. Rigid organization was transformed into mere shifting patterns by innumerable matrices; long-fixed reference points were permanently obscured by infinite variations of scanning; and the definition of reality changed impassionately with every extrapolation. The stark recognition of mutability was quickly transmogrified into a strange tripartite fascination with heraldry and genealogy (the comfort of the past); aerobics and Rolexes (the assertion of the present); predictions and corresponding remedies of all kinds (fear of the future). For the first time in their history, Americans experienced the quiet hysteria of permanent impermanence. The future became a matter of doubt.

Third, exacerbating the twin loss of order and permanence was the growing awareness of globalization. No system of

information can be complete, it seems, until it is linked with the entire universe. The unabated extension of systems brought the world together with the touch of a single key, but it also produced, in the same instant, a cacophony of urgent imperatives regarding the universal human condition. Famine, pestilence, disease, war, poverty, greed, brutality — all in their vilest and most inhumane form — were visited daily, through elaborate quick-response global information systems, upon the hearts and minds of people who, in their erstwhile isolation, had considered such degradations, if at all, beyond the pale of their existence.

America's first response was, as it always had been, a response of conscience mixed with condescension: to put things right all around, according to their own standards and by intervention financially, militarily, politically. But then Americans, to their chagrin, suddenly discovered three astounding realities: (1) the world's insatiable and increasingly vociferous demand for goods, products, and services required to achieve Western standards at most and survival at least; (2) the surprising levelling that had occurred among the wealth of nations with the restructuring of the global economy; and (3) the advent of international competition, for which America was ill-prepared in both productivity and trade.

Suddenly, the great patron of the world

— because of its own deficits, weakened currency, and volatile stock market; because of its own impotent and confused military blundering here and there throughout the world; and because of its own political disarray deriving from a moribund hypocrisy in the White House to a rancorous petulance in the Congress — found itself in the unlikely position of not only being unable to direct the affairs of the world, but — God forbid — even unable to look after its own well-being. Soon it became evident that all the elaborate security "systems" that they had constructed were not, and could never be, adequate to guarantee their future, as they had known it.

So, in an acceptance born of anxiety, Americans passively began to acknowledge that their standard of living could not be preserved for subsequent generations, and that even their own earlier aspirations had become unattainable. Goal setting gave way to lottery tickets; and achievement became mere survival. And for the first time in their history, Americans began to see the future as less. It is no wonder that the information-age mentality depicts human history and life itself as a declining plane; and sees human beings not as builders, or even consumers, but as restive dependents.

The Values of the New Age

Within the past five years, yet another economic system has evolved, and with it perhaps in advance of it — a new predominant mainstream value that correspondingly reflects the dynamic of this economy. If the chart is extended to accommodate the new age, it appears like this:

Economic Era	Primary Resource	Transforming Agent	Time Orientation (Values)
Agrarian	**Land**	**Natural Energy**	**Past**
Industrial	**Capital**	**Processed Energy**	**Present**
Information	**Mind**	**Knowledge**	**Future**
Biogenetics	*Life*	*Morality (or Legislation)*	*Being*

On a rather dull Saturday morning in May 1987, most major newspapers carried the same front page photograph and accompanying story. Actually, the story was not new; it had been brewing for over two years. But, suddenly, it had come to court. It was about a genetic engineering firm in the Napa Valley that had invented and patented a new form of bacteria that, if sprayed on strawberries growing in the field, would render the fruit frost-proof — ergo, its name "ice minus." The only difficulty was that there was some bothersome evidence that those berries, thus treated,

would kill people. Some people tried to stop the spraying. The courts had to decide. This simple case and this simple choice are at once both the harbinger and the epitome of the new age.

First, there is the fact of biogenetics or genetic engineering as practical commercial enterprise. No longer is the alteration of life forms a subject confined to experimental laboratories, Orwellian novels, and horror movies. It has been elevated to the very highest level of professional scientific inquiry and achievement and, at the same time, gained a somewhat blase acceptance from a public that only recently would have considered such tamperings "unnatural." Moreover, it has become the basis of an entirely new economy — perhaps even wealth producing.

It is worth noting, particularly in light of the recent depression in the nation's farm economy, that biogenetics is most directly tied to agricultural products — both crops and livestock. Paradoxically, agriculture is and will likely continue to be the primary economy in which biogenetics realizes its greatest commercial success.

It is only when biogenetics is posited toward the human end of the life continuum that morality becomes an issue. At present, there are in the U.S. Patent Office over 3,000 applications for bioengineered life forms; only two dozen or so propose to

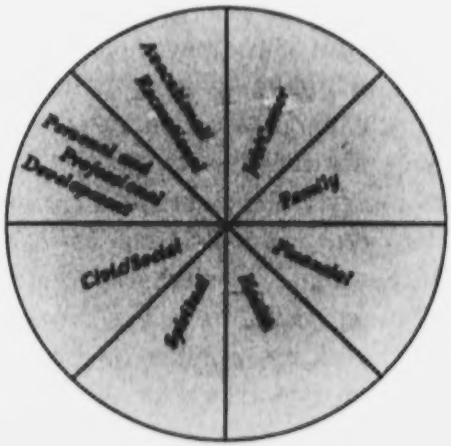
produce radically altered creatures. But already, members of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals are becoming concerned about the ethical issues of reinventing life. The prospect of genetically engineering people has cast the question of ethics or morality into an entirely new context. In addition, a whole host of related moral issues arises. For example, one of the most poignant issues facing the Congress is the question as to whether it is "ethical" to utilize the body of a woman as a manufacturing plant to produce fetuses to be used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease.

When morality fails, laws are the only resort.

The advent of this new age, and the discovery that human beings now have both the capacity and the inclination to recreate themselves in their own images and according to their own imaginations, evidently has also led to a new discovery of life itself. Specifically, it has demanded a redefinition of the human "being." Because if that being is a matter of any number of options, as indeed it appears to be, then what shall be the proper substance of that *being?* Its purpose? Its function? And by what standards will it be judged successful? Or is that an appropriate question? It is more than metaphorical that people of the new mentality view their lives as a circle — not cyclical, but

compassing. Perhaps there is something here originating in the Kierkegaardian existentialism of the 1960's; but, twenty years later, it has emerged as an uncompromising pragmatism characterized by an individualism approaching selfishness. It is not the expansive, rugged individualism of the pioneer; but the focused, protective determinism of the settler.

The best and latest primary research indicates that the new being recognizes eight life components (a life component is defined as any aspect of a person's life in which he or she can set goals). Using the circle symbolically, the components are as follows:



These components require little explanation, but the change in mainstream personal values regarding them needs to be understood.

- **Job/Career:** The dominating life component of the mostly one-dimensional industrialite. The industrialite's primary identity (as in, "What do you do?"); and first obligation (as in, "work for a living"). Now, one of many life components, blended into or subordinated to the others. Personal identity is likely to transform the job; the workplace must accommodate the worker; and work itself must be made a source of satisfaction or pleasure.
- **Family:** Once a private sequestered world, a necessary refuge when there was no other place to go. Customarily sacrificed to ambition, achievement. Something to be controlled. Now, a delight; a source of celebration; itself an achievement; a commitment that transcends the demands of not only the job, but all other life components. The highest priority.
- **Financial:** Once, the anxious security of a payroll, the promise of a retirement program; or the quick accumulation of wealth; the very reason for any enterprise. Now, the interaction of various economic activity into the totality of one's life adequate to achieve a continuing self-sufficiency. Fortunes are sought and

accounted in the present tense.

- **Health:** Once expendable, an expected loss; an excuse for malingering; a reason for commiseration. Now, itself a precious gift, worthy of preservation; the energy source for all human endeavors; the most valuable possession a person can have.
- **Spiritual:** Once confined only to that thought to be religious and otherworldly; forbidden in the world of practicality and reality; a relationship between someone and God or something. Now, a realization of the pneumapsychosomatic nature (spirit, soul, and body) of every person; the practical reality of the human spirit when manifested in self-esteem, motivation, aesthetic appreciation, manners, and respect, as well as reverence; the *a priori* and ultimate relationship between people.
- **Civic/Social:** Once mostly a matter either of compulsion or convenience; a ploy of special interests; a crusade or a retreat for the idealist. Now, an expression of interdependence, of kinship; an honest commitment to the service of others; an urgency to preserve and strengthen the commonweal against the menacing onslaught of poverty, crime, ignorance,

and war.

- **Personal and Professional Development:** Once of no consequence in a world characterized at once by both complacency and hopelessness; futile before the circumstances of luck, fate, chance, and magic; survival as only justification. Now, the vitality of hope, the essence of vision; the only means of creating and realizing opportunity; excellence as a final reward.
- **Avocational/Recreational:** Once only a diversion, an escape; an elixir; a sedative; a filler for leisure time. Now a studied pursuit of personal awareness, an expansion of self; a nurturing and regeneration on one's humanity; the recycling of one's life.

The mainstream personal values of the new age obviously do not derive simply from the existence or nature of these life components; but, rather, from the relationship they each and all bear to and among each other. "Syzygy" is close; "synergy" is closer, but not spot on. "Sophrosyne" is most accurate: that is *balance* — or more precisely, *harmony* — and that is the ultimate meaning of "being."

All this may seem upon initial consideration somewhat theoretical; but it is as real and as practical as any office, assembly line, work station, kitchen, or classroom.

The implications for systems of education are two-fold: First, there is the overwhelming impact on organizational and management considerations; second, there is the decisive effect on the very purpose of education. And there's serious challenge to the current notions about both.

The values inherent in *being* put all traditional organizations at risk, especially corporate enterprise. This is the one fundamental reason giant American corporations are, and have been, irreversibly declining — not because of the strength of world competition, but because of disease within. It is common knowledge that the business world is plagued by inefficiences, loss of productivity, greed, strikes, shoddy workmanship, hateful service, and general irresponsibility and carelessness. Studies have for several years indicated that eighty percent of Americans do not like their jobs. It is revealing that approximately the same percentage ranks "job satisfaction" or "meaningful and challenging work" as what they want most from their job.

The more enlightened companies try desperately to keep their organizations functioning — quarter by quarter — at a modicum of profitability. Employee motivational programs, quality circles, classes on possibility thinking, identifying "corporate cultures," emphasis on "quality of the workplace," decentralization, reading

books about reinventing the corporation, and a plethora of affective, qualitative remedies have been frantic but vain attempts to satisfy either the companies' purposes or the need for individual *being*.

Sooner or later, that need for being will be served. That is why the most critical issue facing any organization — corporate, political, religious, educational — is the alignment of individual interests with the interests of the organization. Unfortunately, it seems that ultimately there is an irreconcilable conflict between the necessities of the traditional organization and the well-being of the person.

The assertion of individual *being* over the exigencies of the organization certainly is a major contributing factor to the phenomenal increase in the number of entrepreneurial small businesses. In fact, the only real growth in the nation's economy in recent months has come from companies with fewer than one hundred employees. Organizations of this size are by their very nature more closely attuned to the individuals who comprise them. There is more likely to be a mutual interdependence and, thus, a more mutual benefit.

Educational organizations have not been immune from the stagnation and disruption resulting from the conflict between personal interests and those of the organization. Tolerance of mediocrity in the name

of tenure, negotiation impasse and strikes, early retirements, the mass exodus of some of the best teachers, low self-esteem among professionals, institutional inertia, and low student achievement are all dramatic indications of a general mood of personal dissatisfaction among educators.

Most school districts have recognized the seriousness of the situation and many have, to their credit, attempted to deal with it with approaches similar to those prevalent in business. Administrators have embraced — sometimes naively, usually prematurely — a variety of fixes: participative management, site-based management, teacher empowerment, team management, quality circles, and anything else that has the aura of "collegiality."

However, as with corporate enterprise, there will be no permanent resolution of the conflict between individual being and the necessities of the organization until the organization is completely reformed with at least as much emphasis on the total well-being of the person as on the person's production. Ironically, that is the only way to achieve production.

The second impact of the values implicit in *being* is on the very basic purpose of education. Historically, school has been the means by which people were prepared to make a living by working in a corporate enterprise. In recent years even legal and

health professionals, to say nothing of artists, have found themselves part of a corporate system.

But with the decline of corporate enterprise and the inversely corresponding growth of free enterprise, the purpose of all education must be seriously reconsidered. Interestingly, American education has in recent years moved in the right direction, if for the wrong reasons. Emphasis on the "whole person," "critical thinking," values, and character are all precursors of a new curriculum that develops individual *being*. The fact is that personal independence, moral integrity, individual responsibility, achievement, invention, genius, compassion, confidence, and self-respect may already be as basic to the successful human being as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Truly educated people of the next century will not apply for a job. They will create one — not to make a living, but as a vital part of a whole life.

Competition

The fourth great change affecting public education is unprecedented *competition* in the free market, worldwide. It has come as an amazing discovery here at the end of the twentieth century that the axiomatic motto of modern economics is at once its clarion,

its theme, and its epitaph. The notion of "supply and demand" generally held as orthodoxy for at least 200 years is exactly backward. Especially in a world bound essentially by a single economic system, the more accurate formula is "demand and supply." The fact is, demand has always created supply.

The Age of Information, with its instant and universal access to the world of everyone else, has raised the expectations of the rest of the world to Western standards — specifically, American standards. The "Globalization of Tastes" has long been recognized by astute marketers; and the recent soirees of Coca-Cola, Levis, Revlon, and other American staples into the likes of Red China is in happy response to a demand that even governments cannot deny.

In fact, there is in the world today more demand for goods, products, and services than ever before. And as political freedom and wealth are shared by more and more people in so-called developing nations, the demand can only increase. In fact, there seems to be no limit.

Correspondingly, never has there been more *supply* of goods, products, and services. The worldwide availability of capital (the world is awash with money), entrepreneurial ambition (the profit motive is a genetic trait of homosapiens), and management talent (MBA's outnumber people)

have, for the time being at least, in almost all areas of demand created an oversupply, and that is precisely the circumstance of competition.

Public education has been forced by circumstance into competition. The unparalleled demand for education — especially that which is excellent — has made education the biggest business in the United States, possibly the world. And where there is opportunity, free enterprise will most assuredly and quickly be found.

It is not generally acknowledged by educators, but public education has already entered the free market, simply because free enterprise has entered the business of education. But it may not be until some form of the voucher system becomes a reality that public education managers will discover that its competition is not the friendly private or parochial school, although new private schools are opening at a rate of one each day. But the real competitive threat is from for-profit corporations that are expert in capturing selected markets, extremely skillful in developing curricula and educational programs responsive to market demand, comfortable with performance guarantees, and unhampered by maudlin altruism about social responsibility.

The question for public education is simple: How can it compete in the free

market? The answer is also simple: innovation, technology, and excellence.

First, *innovation*. Sadly enough, public education is not known for its creativity or courage; but rather for inertia, homeostasis, and convenience. Except for the wild frenzy of experimentations that broke out in the 1960's, which fitfully ran their course and then died from exhaustion, America's schooling has changed very little since the Industrial Revolution. The very fact that "schooling" can be used and understood in this context is all too indicative of the system's resistance to change and its resolve to serve primarily the personal convenience of those involved in it. In fact, the first concern in the operation and administration of public education seems to be the convenience of staff, parents, students, and the community at large.

Peter Drucker admonished long ago that it is not enough to do something right; the important thing is to do the right thing. It is a sad commentary on the leadership of public education — and, indeed, precipitative of the current crises in the nation's education — that all of its evaluation systems, methods, instruments, and techniques are devoted toward measuring how well something is being done (and that usually by subjective appraisals of processes). Very little effort has been made to determine whether the thing in question

should be done at all. It is a pitiful condition to be found doing the wrong thing well. Or as one official of a now-defunct manufacturing company recently mused, "We were working like hell up to the day they closed the doors."

The second answer to competition is the full application of state-of-the-art *technology*. Educators seem generally loathe to admit it, but technology has rendered time and space moot in teaching and learning processes. The concept of "going" to school, as in building and classroom, is as obsolete as the time-worn industrialite debate over pupil-teacher ratios. There is no question that the teacher will always be the primary catalyst in disciplined learning, but the role of the teacher is being totally redefined by factors other than technology.

In fact, it may be that education itself is being totally redefined as well. Technology has created limitless opportunities for learning — both in terms of the amount of information and knowledge that exists and the accessibility of that information and knowledge. Since learning is a natural human activity, occurring often accidentally, coincidentally and randomly, perhaps education must be properly defined as any learning with both *intent* and *discipline*. And that kind of education can occur anytime, anyplace. That plays havoc with traditional so-called "delivery systems."

The third and most conclusive answer to competition is *excellence.* There is an old axiom well known in the retail business that holds, "In good times, everybody survives; in hard times, only the best survive." That is to say, the final test of long-term marketability of any good, product, or service is its quality. As competition intensifies, the higher the quality, the greater the likelihood of surviving and surpassing; the lower the quality, the greater the vulnerability. It seems that people will always buy quality — sometimes even when they cannot afford it.

It is most interesting that, for at least the last decade, a great deal of verbiage regarding "quality" and "excellence" in education has been loosely thrown about by both critics and professional educators — most of it in the form of placeboes to appease dissatisfied customers who are adamantly refusing to accept anything less than the best in America's schools.

Unfortunately, educators have seemed loathe to define excellence in education, presumably because such a definition would incur corresponding accountability. It is remarkable, and somewhat of an indictment of professional educators, that every other profession, trade, craft, job, skill, hobby, or any other human enterprise has established definite, recognizable standards of excellence. Yet education lan-

guishes in the smug vagueness of "variables" and political considerations. But sooner or later, public education will realize what business has known for a long time: Ultimately, all quality is defined by the consumer. That is especially true of excellence.

The greatest obstacle facing professional educators as they attempt to define excellence in specific dimensions and by certain standards is the general predisposition to be "everything to everybody." And that notion is exactly contrary to the very nature of excellence. Excellence is nothing less than strength compounded. It results only from *concentration of effort* — not from dissipation of effort. The broader the focus, the less the likelihood of high quality. Real excellence can be achieved only within a context of a narrow, specifically defined purpose.

A case in point. Recently a manufacturing-sales company found itself in serious difficulty with regard to profitability. A wise business counselor turned the company around with just three questions to top management. *The first question:* "How many products does your company make and sell?" No one knew. That was the first clue. When the product line was counted, management was surprised to discover that the company made and inventoried 146 products. *Second question:* "How many

products is the company actually selling?" No one knew. Supposed all. Second clue. After a thorough analysis of sales, it was a traumatic revelation that ninety percent of the company sales was in twenty-six products. *Third question:* "Of these twenty-six products, how many actually produce a profit?" No one knew. But by now, a new state of awareness had been reached.

When a thorough analysis of profitability — item by item — had been completed, the company realized that ninety-five percent of all its operating profit was being derived from only *eight* related products. That company now has eighty percent of the world market in those products. The customers who buy from other sources are those who are willing to sacrifice quality to cost.

The ultimate test of character for any person or organization is the point at which known excellence is compromised.

In business such specialization is referred to as "niche marketing." The speciality is the *market niche.* It is worth noting, in this discussion of competition, that true evolutionists postulate that the way the species survived was not by "survival of the fittest" as commonly interpreted. The popular myth is that the strongest survived mortal combat with competing species. However, real evolutionists know the species survived, not by killing each other off,

but by finding a niche — a special, limited place where they could not only survive but also prosper. In that sense, they were "fit" for — or "fitted" to — their environment or marketplace. And, indeed, the "fittest" survived — and still do.

The "niche" principle is as applicable to education as it is for the species and business. It is certain; it is absolute. The problem, obviously, is determining in a chaotic environment, sometimes self-induced, just what the proper niche of public education must be if it is to survive and prosper. Like most other truths, the answer is quite simple, but the translation into reality is difficult and it requires both great vision and great courage.

The simple answer is *localization* — intense and unremitting localization. Excellence cannot be realized through measures set by federal and state mandates. Excellence cannot be "normed." The mad rush in America to standardize education ironically has had and will continue to have a deleterious effect on the quality of education. Excellence cannot be standardized, homogenized, or predetermined for school systems across the nation. Excellence, rather, must be discovered and defined at each and every locality — even down to the building and unit level.

That is not to say that national norms and standards are not useful. They are; but

not as goals. National norms should be considered merely "reference points" by which the local system is able to judge its performance in a universal context. Invariably, the standards of excellence established by visionary, courageous school districts always exceed those prescribed by external authorities. Leaders always set the standards of excellence.

The Urgency for Change

These four kinds of change: Demographics; economic transitions; the transformation of mainstream values; and competition are inexorable and irresistible. If they are to be managed, they must be met with leadership — a new kind of personal leadership characterized by bold vision and unrelenting commitment.

The Greek word for a military general was *strategos;* that is, one who leads *(agein)* an army *(stratos).* The *strategema* were the daring yet prudently calculated plans by which the leader concentrated effort on controlling circumstances and events, thereby ultimately winning a victory. *Strategic* planning is still the means by which leaders invent the future.

Section III
Toward a Definition of Strategic Planning

What Is Strategic Planning?

Just as sure as strategic planning is an idea whose time has come for education, there is a distressing overabundance of ideas about what strategic planning really is. Almost overnight, it seems, a bevy of planning experts has arisen with a confusing array of "models," formats, and processes for strategic planning. After all, consulting is the second oldest profession. The result is that planning quite often (1) produces nothing but disappointment; (2) becomes a series of costly false starts; (3) leads to the complete abandonment of formal planning; and (4) becomes a facade hiding reality. For that reason, strategic planning should be understood first in terms of what it is *not*. Such a list could go on forever, but here it will be limited to the seven most popular imposters.

Planning: Not a Model

Strategic planning is not a *"model."* That word — and probably even more the concept — makes a very dynamic process nothing more than a dull, uninspiring scheme which can be superimposed on any existing organization or circumstance. This approach to planning becomes nothing more than a filling in of the squares on a crossword puzzle, painting by the numbers, or connecting the dots. Many school districts, believing a model to be a means of making planning either easier or "right," have discovered too late that the only result "models" achieve is the model itself.

Planning: Not a Process

Strategic planning is not an endless *intellective frenzy* to be reveled in *ad infinitum* by a host of celebrants raptured by process and disdainful — if not fearful — of consequences. The school district that attempts to plan by creating a full and fancy bureaucratic planning department staffed by a host of research and statistic experts; foundering for years in the collection of trivial information, the development of theory, and the postponement of decisions; and by involving hordes of uninformed, uninterested, and unexcitable so-called

"publics" will ultimately find that the best way not to plan is to plan. To wit: One school district — admittedly of considerable size — has embarked upon a course to the future with a crew of eight professionals (they are looking for two more); a passenger list made up of several thousand people from various publics arranged into fifty or so committees; a cargo of inconsequential minutiae brought together from all kinds of strange places; all on a three-year odyssey of mystifying business. At last report, they were lost at sea.

Planning: Not an Academic Exercise

Strategic planning is not an *academic exercise*. Its end is not to explain, not to analyze, not to hypothesize, and certainly not to demonstrate an author's ability to cut and paste facts and speculations into high-falutin tindentious conclusions. In short, strategic planning is not thesis material. Neither is strategic planning an extended exercise in problem identification bereft of solutions. This approach is that of the confirmed amateur planner who confuses planning with confusion.

Typically, this is the approach pandered about by so-called "centers for this, that, and the other" — usually having something to do with "research." Typically, the only

product they provide is a dazzling collection of megatrends and millidata arranged so as to be untranslatable into any kind of action, to say nothing of sense. Unfortunately, many very professionally run school districts and corporations have learned from these "planners" much more than they ever wanted to know about expensive futility.

Planning: Not a Prescription

Strategic planning is not a *prescription*. One of the, if not *the*, saddest ideas about strategic planning is that it is very much like a physician's prescribing a remedy for a patient who is, or who is about to be, sick. Except in this case the physician is a "consultant" — an expert who has a wide variety of remedies all mixed up according to patented formulas, and who dispenses them to the infirm for a substantial fee, plus expenses.

This is the kind of planning usually done by high-powered firms prestigiously located in North American centers of sweetness and light — such as Washington, D.C. It is this kind of planning that has been severely criticized by distinguished business magazines, like *Forbes*, for being little more than grand bunko schemes. In fact, one business magazine recently referred to

this kind of planning as the "seagull" approach: "The consultants fly out of Boston, circle around the client a few times, drop a strategy on him, and fly home."

Usually, such firms have one or two really good professional planners. But these one or two professionals are even more dedicated capitalists so the client is seldom given the benefit of their experience and skill. Most of the client's actual planning activity is directed by a recent MBA graduate who has no experience, and only textbook skill, and a mortgage on a BMW.

The major drawbacks to prescription planning, other than the exorbitant expense, are four: (1) The recommendations of the prescribed plan are quite often irrelevant (done somewhere else by someone else); (2) they are usually impractical (read once in a book); and (3) implementation seldom occurs (not my job). Furthermore, (4) this approach all but prohibits local participation in developing the plan and, therefore, precludes local acceptance of the plan *(ex cathedra)*.

This kind of planning seems to be designed mostly for those organizations that can afford more than they need because, evidently, they really didn't need anything anyway.

Planning: Not an Edict

Strategic planning is not a *edict*. That is, it is not an autocratic pronouncement which is, often secretly, put together by those at the top of an organization and then passed down to be implemented by those at the bottom. But, unfortunately, this has been a rather typical approach to planning among education administrators. In fact, many superintendents are hired on the premise that they themselves will bring a new "program" to the district. And it is not uncommon for superintendents of long tenure to be expected by the board of education and the staff single-handedly to provide the annual operational plan.

No one can argue that anyone who is distinguished enough to be considered for a superintendency will not bring to the job and the district very valuable knowledge, philosophies, and skills. But, on the other hand, one cannot deny the oft-observed phenomenon that any change, after all, often produces positive results — at least temporarily. And no one can argue that veteran administrators do not have a treasure trove of experience and wisdom. But, then, no one can deny that single-handedness breeds single-mindedness, and that twenty years of experience may be just one year of experience twenty times.

Quite obviously, there are two major

disadvantages of top-down, autocratic planning. In the first place, this kind of planning is always lacking in substance. The fact is, a plan's scope cannot exceed the capacity or the aspirations of those who develop it. The substance of a plan diminishes in direct proportion to the number of people involved in the development of it; when the number of participants reaches one, the "plan" becomes no more than a personal decree. The second disadvantage is a corollary to the first: As the number of participants diminishes, so does the very critical general support for the plan; when the number reaches one, the "plan" becomes no more than an impotent argument.

Edict plans are probably the most potentially dangerous of all the pseudo-plans because they can easily become a deluding assertion of progress in the midst of regression.

Planning: Not Political Manipulation

Strategic planning is not *political manipulation* — not by the superintendent, not by the board, not by the teacher union or any other special interest group within the school system or the community. Planning cannot be predicated on hidden scenarios and ulterior motives. It is not an occasion for bargaining or power plays. It is not a

time for competition. And above all, it is not a machination of attitudes and wills toward a foregone conclusion. Planning is simply not planning if the conclusion is known in advance. If planning does not surprise, it will only disappoint. And for that reason, the degree to which a plan surprises is the real measure of its success.

Planning: Not a Budget

Finally, strategic planning is not a *budget*. Budgeting is, after all, nothing but a nip-and-tuck process by which the pieces of a financial puzzle are made to fit. Of course, those who attempt to plan in this fashion are wont to make the claim that their budget reflects the organization's priorities. And, in reality, it does: It provides clear evidence that a budget has priority over real needs.

A "plan" that starts with an existing budget as a base completely ignores the possibilities and detail of the future; and even so-called "zero-based" budgeting (in which each and every expenditure is justified each year) places more emphasis on figures than on needs. Quite obviously, public institutions labor under financial limitations and restraints; but there have been very few good ideas that ever went lacking for funding — if the commitment was there. The simple truth is that strategic

planning does not mean planning a budget; it means budgeting the plan.

What Strategic Planning Is

Strategic planning ultimately must be understood for what it is, rather than what it is not. For example, not a "model," strategic planning is an effective combination of both a *process* and *discipline* which, if faithfully adhered to, produces a plan characterized by originality, vision, and realism. The discipline includes the vital ingredients of the plan itself; the process is the organizational dynamic through which the vital ingredients are derived. Both the discipline and the process are aimed at *total concentration of the organization's resources on mutually predetermined measurable outcomes.* In its simplest terms, this is strategic planning.

Strategic planning is not an endless intellective frenzy — which is a substitute for decisions; but it is a voluntary commitment to generate rational decisions about the deployment of resources toward fixed goals and priorities. The whole purpose of planning is to make decisions about the future before the future either forces the decisions or renders any decisions irrelevant.

Strategic planning is not an academic exercise in theory analyses and problem

identification, but it is an obligation to achieve measurable results translated ultimately into performance standards for those individuals responsible for implementing the plan. The essence of a strategic plan is the identification of specific desired results to which all the effort and activity of the organization will be dedicated. And the success of any plan is determined only by the results it produces.

Strategic planning is not a prescription from an outside expert, but rather a proscription that is formulated by the combined expertise within the organization. The fact is that the people who work in an organization know more about the organization — its problems, concerns, and potential — than any number of planning consultants could possibly know. Beyond that, the local people are just as aware of global issues and circumstances, and are even more particularly sensitive to the impact of those factors on their unique situations. And, certainly, they alone understand all the complexities of local issues. In any school district, the best planning consultants available anywhere are quite often the existing staff. They, together with the patrons, community leaders, and students already possess all the answers to the district's future. All they need are direction and impetus — in a word, leadership.

Strategic planning is not an edict, but a

consensus plan derived through the application of the basic principles of participative management; specifically, (1) that those closest to the job know the job better than anyone else; (2) that strategic information flows downward and operational information flows upward; (3) that decisions should be made at the lowest appropriate level; (4) that one cannot participate above his or her level of authority, accountability, and information; and (5) that accountability is commensurate with authority.

In practice, these principles mean that, with reference to the organizational structure, the strategic plan is developed reciprocally from both top down and bottom up. Without this duality, the result is a plan that is either too broad or too narrow to gain a common commitment to goals and priorities. A plan that is not based on consensus is not a plan; it is an argument.

Strategic planning is not political manipulation, but an open, unrestricted examination of issues and consensus by people of good will from each and every constituency of the district. The successful planning process can never be democratic; it must emphasize *common* interests rather than special interests; and it must seek consensus rather than majority.

Strategic planning is not in any way whatever a mere budget whose only purpose is always to impose and frustrate crea-

tivity and confound excellence — in short, to limit progress. Strategic planning, if properly done, unleashes creativity from throughout the organization, sparks new enthusiasm for excellence, and guarantees progress without the artificial limitations of budgets —all because planning begins and ends with ideas and aspirations, not numbers. Budget planners can make the numbers work, all right; but strategic planners work the future.

The Discipline and Process

So what is strategic planning? Strategic planning consists of both a *discipline* and a *process;* the *discipline* being the substantive ingredients or components of the plan itself; the *process,* the method or procedure by which the plan is created. To argue the relative value of either is moot; to attempt completely to separate them is foolish. Both are inextricably connected and, if properly interwoven, will provide a superior plan.

The *discipline,* if properly applied, will render the *process* entirely meaningful because it forces a complete and final resolution of all relevant issues. The *process,* if properly followed, assures substance in the discipline because it provides a controlled concentration of rational effort on the issues involved.

Definitions

The first step in any attempt at planning is the definition of terms. At present, that is somewhat difficult because terms related to planning — particularly the discipline — are helplessly bandied about with no regard for meaning and with little evidence of clear thinking. In fact, some planning vocabularies seem to be a kind of doublespeak devised to confound decision making and defy implementation. As with most other matters of the mind, the literal words themselves are not as important as the concepts they represent; but it is for sure that sloppiness in word use is a direct result of sloppiness in thinking. Therefore, the planning discipline must have a vocabulary that manifests and demands sharp thinking and that can be translated into precise, purposeful action. Reliable studies show that most so-called strategic plans fail because no one can prove for sure what the verbiage really means, if anything. For the record, that is the famous "Kerygmatic Fallacy" — the more you peel away, the less there is, until there is nothing at all.

Experience demonstrates that the most effective planning vocabulary is made up of fairly common, garden variety words given specialized meaning for planning. The simplest, most workable vocabulary for the planning discipline consists of about a

dozen utilitarian terms: *Beliefs, Mission, Policies, Internal Analysis, External Analysis, Objectives, Strategies,* and *Action Plans.* Also useful are the terms *Weaknesses, Strengths, Organizational Analysis, Competition,* and *Environment.*

PLANNING VOCABULARY

Beliefs
Mission
Policies
Internal Analysis
- **Strengths**
- **Weaknesses**
- **Organizational Structure**

External Analysis
- **Competition**
- **Environment**

Objectives
Strategies
Action Plans

When these few terms, defined by the specific context of strategic planning, are arranged in a logical, progressive order, they provide the simplest, yet the most effective, discipline for planning anything, anywhere, anytime, by anybody.

Section IV
The Planning Discipline

Beliefs

The statement of beliefs is the most logical, if not the most necessary, beginning of any plan. It is a formal expression of the organization's *fundamental values:* its ethical code, its overriding convictions, its inviolate commitments. Essentially, it describes the moral character of the organization. That means that the statement of beliefs of an organization must represent a composite, a distillation, of the personal values of those charged with the responsibility of leading the organization.

The fact is that every organization has a distinctive moral character even though it may not be formally articulated, perhaps not even admitted. And that corporate character is inescapably a reflection of the organization's leadership. However, the statement of beliefs should not be merely an acknowledgment of what the organization is, but an expression of what it aspires to be.

The statement of beliefs serves a dual purpose: First, it will provide the value system upon which the subsequent portions of the plan will be developed and evaluated;

second, it will, as part of the published plan, become a public declaration of the organization's heart and soul. Because it is so important, the statement of beliefs must be precise in language and practical in application. Long, rambling, hazy, philosophical treatises are neither precise nor practical and, therefore, have no place in a serious plan. These exercises in pompous futility are either pitiful attempts at saying something, or very pretentious ways of saying nothing.

Quite in contrast, an effective statement of beliefs is simply formatted, crisply stated, and easily understood. A typical statement by a school district may read like this:

We believe that:

- There is no achievement without competition.
- Advocacy for students is the responsibility of all persons involved in the educational process.
- Excellence is worth the cost.
- Reward must be commensurate with performance.
- Human diversity is a vital characteristic of public education.
- Education must be measured in terms of individual achievement relative to ability.

Mission

The mission statement is a clear and concise expression of the district's *purpose* and *function*. Always written in *one* sentence, the statement should reflect both the clarity of thinking and the vision characteristic of professional leadership. While the mission statement must acknowledge reality, it must also aspire to the ideal. Furthermore, the mission statement should not be merely a description of the *status quo*, but rather a bold declaration of what the organization will be.

Above all else, the mission statement must represent a commitment to the special distinctiveness, the uniqueness, that sets the organization apart from others like it. That means that all the options available to the organization must have been seriously deliberated and a single identity agreed upon. Quite often school districts have the mistaken notion that their mission is so rigidly set by law that they have no choice at the local level. But most districts find, upon close examination, that in actuality they have considerable flexibility and very few limits.

The mission statement, like beliefs, serves two purposes — one in the planning process, the other in the application of the plan. In the first place, the mission is the keystone upon which the entire plan de-

pends. Everything else in the plan springs from it and must be judged by it. But everything else also judges it. Because until all the remaining portions of the plan come together to prove the efficacy of the mission statement, it is at best tentative. In short, the mission tests the plan; the plan tests the mission.

The second purpose of the mission statement is obvious: In application, in practice, it serves to focus all the organization's attention and to concentrate all its energies on one common purpose. The mission is the one thing that should be known and understood by every person in the organization; otherwise, how can anyone make any sense out of his or her job or other activities? There is simply no way to measure or describe the enormous positive impact that the knowledge of the mission by all employees can and will have on an organization.

On the other hand, lack of awareness can only result in cross purposes, fragmentation, and loss of productivity. Recently, a business experiencing financial and production problems hired a consultant to analyze the situation. Twenty-five of the top managers were asked by the consultant to write down the organization's mission. The tabulated result included seventeen different ideas about the basic purpose and function of the company. Little wonder it

was in serious trouble. And, although the performance of a company and a school district will assuredly be measured in different terms, trouble is trouble in any language.

The mission statement of a school district must address the specific, local situation; and, therefore, it cannot be borrowed from others in the same business. Nor can it be just another academic soiree into the wonderfully warm and fuzzy world of theoretical perambulations.

For example, no one so far has been able to say for sure what the following statement means, much less what action it mandates, and the only thing that could result from it is a warm glow. The best analysis of it is: Meaning everything, it means nothing.

> The mission of the Warmglow School District is to provide a quality educational process designed to enhance the student's life-long ability to experience his or her maximum potential in an ever-changing world and to work for the betterment of mankind by making a positive contribution to society.

Quite on the other hand, a meaningful mission statement for a school district might read as follows:

> The mission of District Seven is to produce citizens who can effectively communicate, gather and use information, make responsible decisions, and adapt to the challenges of the twenty-first century, by providing a diverse, well-trained staff dedicated to delivering a sequential, comprehensive curriculum based upon fiscal responsibility, community involvement, sound management practices, and a commitment to measurable academic progress.

Policies

First, what policies are not. Policies, as defined here, are not the traditional board policies; nor the routine, operational, administrative, or academic rules and procedures — like who parks where and how many English credits a student must have to graduate. They are not laws or regulations handed down from the state or local school board. In short, they are not restrictions externally or internally imposed on an organization. And they are not a bilious recitation of the obvious.

Rather, policies here are *strategic* policies: limitations the organization places upon itself for good reason. They are para-

meters, boundaries in which the organization will operate; they are things the organization either will *never* do or will *always* do. Such policies are "strategic" because they have the effect of "positioning" the organization in terms of its own mission.

Stated usually in the negative, policies provide a kind of security alarm system to warn the organization when it is about to do something either unwise or dangerous. Stated sometimes in the positive, policies are the imperatives that keep the organization true to itself. Examples of actual policies written by school districts indicate the wide variety of policy content:

- We will not offer any adult or continuing education courses or programs.
- We will accept no new programs or activities without:
  a) a favorable cost-benefit analysis
  b) participation in the development of the program by representatives of all those affected
  c) provision for staff training
  d) a defined evaluation process.
- We will not tolerate any action or circumstances that degrade any person.
- We will develop educational programs and support services in response to community/student needs, rather than staff availability or competence.

- No student will graduate without demonstrating competency in basic skills.
- We will not allow policies, procedures, or behaviors that impede student success.
- The District's attendance policy will be uniformly enforced.

There are certain requirements to be met in developing a policy. First, the policy must be observable and controllable; second, it must be absolutely definitive in its terms; third, it must represent practicality (in any matter, the organization's last practice — not what is written — constitutes policy).

The notion of policies is quite often difficult to grasp by planners; but, if properly conceived, policies are a very critical part of the strategic plan. They can establish "ground rules"; set in place protective mechanisms, rations, formulas, and the like; dictate codes of behavior; define expectations; assert priorities; and define various boundaries. All together, policies have the effect of *focusing* the mission statement.

Internal Analysis

Strictly speaking, the internal analysis and, for that matter, the external analysis

are as much a part of the planning process as the planning discipline. And while they are not normally included in the final published plan — except, perhaps, as an appendix — they must be considered here as a prerequisite to developing the objectives and strategies, which are the heart of the plan. In fact, it is not unusual for the objectives and strategies to be direct responses to these analyses.

That means that honesty is foremost. Complete objectivity, of course, is essential throughout the entire planning process, but it is extremely critical in making these analyses. A failure at this point to deal with all issues openly and frankly will severely detract from the validity of the final plan. On the other hand, forthright analyses produce not only valid objectives and strategies, they also demonstrate to the various publics the organization's sincerity. The Internal Analysis consists of a thorough, unbiased, tripartite examination of the organization: specifically strengths; weaknesses; and the organizational chart as it reflects function and information flow.

Strengths

Strengths are defined as those internal qualities, circumstances, or conditions that contribute to the organization's ability to

achieve its mission. For that reason, only those strengths that directly relate to the stated mission should be considered here. That is to say, emphasis should not be on strengths relative to other like organizations, but strictly relative to this local mission.

A recognition of strengths is important in planning because it signals to the organization the areas in which success may be most easily compounded. Real strengths represent achievement and, therefore, are testimony to the organization's ability to perform, as well as its potential for even greater achievement. In fact, excellence is nothing more than a strength pursued to its ultimate.

A typical list of a school district's strengths reads like this:

- Child-focused staff
- Excellent fiscal management
- Community participation
- Strong volunteer program
- Excellent early intervention and Child Find programs
- High student achievement measured by test scores
- Exemplary special educational programs
- Affirmative Action Plan
- High level of trust practiced within management

- Rapport with State Department of Education
- Credibility at state level
- Sound employee benefits
- Numerous scholarships, awards, and recognitions for our students
- Parent involvement/support
- Skill-based curriculum
- People willing to take risks.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses of an organization are those internal characteristics, conditions, or circumstances that restrict, or even prevent, the realization of the mission. Whereas strengths represent achievement, weaknesses usually indicate either a lack of performance or the inability to perform. However, weaknesses are quite often simply the result of benign neglect. Therefore, they are not necessarily a reflection of the abilities or the intent of the organization, but of either its priorities or its current capacity.

There is one very important thing to remember about weaknesses: That is, all organizations have them and will continue to have them. The trick is to distinguish between those weaknesses which are tolerable and those which are critical. That is to say, some weaknesses can be, and some-

times must be, lived with; it is a waste of resources and much weariness of the flesh to attempt to overcome them. Organizations that attempt to do this are majoring in minors. But critical weaknesses — those which negatively affect the realization of the mission — must, quite obviously, be identified for correction. That corrective action will be reflected in the objectives and/or strategies.

Typical weaknesses listed by a school district are:

- Board decision versus administrative interpretation
- Differences in management styles leading to inconsistent application of policies
- Unclear instructions from administration to building principals to volunteers
- Lack of accountability/responsibility
- Important decisions made in isolation without known criteria
- The District is not a good communicator between parents and community at large
- Lack of consensus on basic functions of the system; no common purpose; lack of general focus
- Lack of equity among buildings (facilities, supplies, books, etc)
- Not enough qualified substitute teachers

- Weak communication between administration and local and state government agencies
- General salary inequities
- Disproportionate time and energy spent on small numbers of students
- "Sloppy" staff work
- Inefficient office procedures (lack of computerization)
- Too many layers between superintendent and principals
- Too many special interest groups running their own agenda
- Some people involved in curriculum development are not taking an active role or providing active leadership
- No Districtwide plan for staff renewal
- Building and departmental supply budgets are inadequate to meet classroom teachers' needs
- Salary compensation inadequate for some classroom positions when compared to responsibilities
- Historically, Board has become involved in the administration of the District — creates unclear understanding on behalf of staff
- Too much dead weight/lack of consistent treatment by administrators of inadequate employees
- "Low-bid mentality."

Organizational Critique

The third part of the *internal analysis* is an *organizational critique;* that is, a close examination of the organization's internal functions, communication, and levels of authority as reflected in the organizational structure. This critique is not aimed at correcting; merely at determining what is working and what is not. In fact, at this point, "fixes" or solutions are totally inappropriate. For this reason: The very last thing that will be done in the planning process is a strategic organization (or reorganization). Why? Because one of the cardinal principles of strategic management is this: Organize to the plan; do not plan to the organization.

Translated into practice, this means that organizing cannot properly take place until the final and complete plan is set. Then, and only then, is the organization arranged for implementation. But a thorough critique at this point in the planning process not only identifies the present difficulties that need to be remedied, but also establishes a somewhat philosophical context — if not rationale — for future organizing.

To be meaningful, an organizational critique must approach the analysis from five points of view: (1) span of control; (2) verticality; (3) gaps; (4) redundancies; and (5) formality versus informality.

"Span of control" refers to the number of people or functions that report to any one person. The fact is that there is a limit to what a person can effectively manage; beyond that point there is a loss of control. While the old rule of thumb is five to seven subordinates; in actual practice, effective span of control is determined by many variables other than numbers. For example, the abilities of both the manager and subordinates; the type of work involved; the geographical spread or the physical layout of the work; and the organization's management philosophy are all factors influencing, and even sometimes dictating, span of control. A typical example of the kind of observations that might constitute the critique of span of control is: "The assistant superintendent for instruction has fifty-one subordinates reporting directly."

"Verticality" has reference to the number of layers in the organization; that is, the levels of authority from top to bottom. This aspect of an organization is critical because of its intrinsic relationship to decision making. Usually, the more layers, the longer the process. In fact, it is possible through layering to substitute process for decision. And when layering is further compounded by dotted lines running here and there throughout the organizational chart, there is clear evidence that the organization is designed not around specific au-

thorities for decision making with the accompanying accountabilities, but rather to obscure accountability through deliberate vagueness in individual responsibility, thereby rendering decision making (as well as results) irrelevant. Layering must be evaluated strictly in terms of its effect on the functioning of the organization. An example of an observation dealing with verticality might be: "The department heads must go through six levels of management for approval to purchase classroom equipment."

"Gaps" and "redundancies" are quite similar in the sense that they both represent the inappropriate application of resources to task. But they are different in that one means too little; the other, too much. Specifically, "gaps" in the organization's structure occur when functions vital to the mission are not translated into actual jobs, authority, or reporting relationships. That is to say: (1) There is no position charged with the function; (2) there is a position, but it lacks authority to function; or (3) there is a position with appropriate authority, but it is relegated to ineffectiveness by short-circuited relationships with other parts of the organization. An example of a gap is: "We have no public relations office," or, "Everyone coordinates staff development, so there is no staff development."

"Redundancies" simply means that a

job or task is being performed or supervised by more than one person or more than one organizational unit, without good reason. Not only does this result in expensive duplication of effort, but it also obscures responsibility and accountability, because anybody's job is nobody's job; or, perhaps more to the point, if two people are equally responsible for the same thing, neither is. In practice, co-responsibility means no accountability.

A typical example of a redundancy is: "The affirmative action program is being administered by three offices."

External Analysis

The external analysis is usually the most exciting part of the planning discipline, because it is futuristic — looking into the future for three to five years; prophetic — predicting events and conditions that will occur during that time; and challenging — identifying specific impacts on the organization as a result of those events and circumstances. Also appropriately called "environmental analysis, " this exercise is based on the realization that there are and will be many external factors over which the planning organization has no control; but that does not mean that these external influences must necessarily control the

organization. That, in fact, is what planning is all about — maintaining control even in an environment that is out of control.

Stated quite simply, the purpose of the external analysis is to prevent surprises that may negatively affect the organization's ability or opportunity to accomplish its mission. But more than providing mere intelligence about the future, the external analysis should serve as the immediate rationale for the formulation of objectives and the strategic commitment of resources. That is to say, the external analysis is not for information only; it is *demands* for action.

If the external analysis is not complete, it is not worthwhile. And to be complete for school districts, it must deal with six categories of influence on the organization: namely, *social, political, demographic, economic, technological,* and *educational trends and developments.* Each category must be analyzed in terms of its several factors, assumptions made about each factor, and the impact of each assumption calculated. For example, in the social category, one district recently identified thirteen factors: language, graying of America, diverse cultures, family structure, sex roles, communicable diseases, job/careers, leisure time, high tech, morals, religion, entertainment, and wellness/appearance.

This raises an interesting point. Most educational leaders have traditionally

thought that the best information on subjects such as this come only from big research factories like Harvard Business School, or fancy think-tanks like the Brookings Institution. But the fact is that the external analysis needed for practical planning usually is best performed by the professionals within the organization. Most of them know as much about the future as those paid to study it, and their perception of what the future means to the district has a far more realistic orientation.

The following examples demonstrate not only the quality of the analyses typically achieved, but also the best format for clarity and effect.

Category: Educational Trends/Developments		
Factors	Assumptions	Impact
1. Career Ladders	1. State mandated in 3-5 years	1. a. Expensive b. Education will improve c. Better employees d. Less turnover

Category: Demographic		
Factors	Assumptions	Impact
1. Population	1. a. Need for additional facilities b. Increased service c. Increase in crime d. Increased tax base	1. a. Environmental b. Increase in costs c. Increase in law enforcement d. More available dollars

Ultimately, the purpose of such a detailed analysis of each category is a total assessment of the "impacts" on the organization. Once that assessment is complete, it must be placed in the context of the other components of the planning discipline — *Beliefs, Mission, Policies, and Internal Analysis* — and, at the same time, all those other components must be reconsidered in light of the impacts. As a result, three things may happen: (1) All the components are judged still valid and are not changed; (2) some or all of the components of the discipline are modified to reflect a new reality; (3) the organization gains a greater resolve to its previously stated aspirations and commitments, especially as regards *Beliefs* and *Mission*.

Competition

Somewhat related to the External Analysis but deserving its own special attention for planning purposes is the matter of competition. Competition is defined as any other organization providing the same marketplace. Typically, public education has not given a great deal of thought to competition, and certainly not to "products" and the "marketplace." Perhaps that is the reason so many districts are experiencing significant decreases in both enroll-

ment and quality of education. But the fact is that the future of public schools cannot be guaranteed by law; only by the performance of those schools judged against an ever growing number of educational options.

The analysis of competition at this point in the planning discipline forces the district to acknowledge its relative advantages and disadvantages and, furthermore, to consider the points on which the competition is most vulnerable. Some purist educators do not like to talk about things as crass as competition, products, and marketing. But because public education is now in the free market, knowledge about competitors may prove necessary for survival, certainly for viability.

There are two ways to approach an analysis of competition: one rather complicated, the other simple. The more complicated approach first identifies all the relevant points of comparison and contrast and then looks at each competitor using some sort of value scale. The purpose of this approach is (1) to assess thoroughly the planning district in terms of its competition so plans can be made to strengthen it against competition; and (2) to discover specific weaknesses of each competitor in the event that the planning organization chooses to develop a "marketing" plan either to retain or to gain students.

Such an analysis is often charted as follows:

Competition

TRAITS*						
Size						
Image						
Funding						
Expenditure Per Student						
Management						
Quality of Staff						
Curriculum						
Extra Co-curricular Activities						
Teacher Pupil Ratio						
Etcetera						

* Actual figures are used when appropriate; other comparisons will require a numerical scale with values assigned by the planning team. This is not an academic exercise; absolute precision is *not* required.

The second approach is also very effective, although not quite as thorough or as "scientific." It simply identifies the competitor by type (or by name) and then lists the advantages of both the competitor and the planning district, side by side, but not

necessarily point for point. Then the competitor's points of vulnerability (P.O.V.) are listed. Such an analysis typically looks like this:

Competition: Parochial/Religious

Their Advantage	Our Advantage
Religious education taught	Financial resources
Public perception of small classes	Broad curriculum
Elitism/being with own kind	Support services
No federal or state mandates	Certificated (highly qualified staff)
Sense of ownership because of tuition	More extra curriculum offerings
Perception of caring	Better/broader plant facilities
Parents feel they have more control	More diverse staff and students
Can select their students	Broader base of support
	More up-to-date equipment/texts and curriculum research
	Accredited course work
	External/internal technical assistance
	Total community input
	No tuition

Points of vulnerability: Inferior staff qualifications. Inadequate texts, equipment, and facilities. Increasing costs for them.

Once the analysis of competition is complete, the organization has all the information needed to develop appropriate and realistic objectives and strategies to support the mission statement. From this point forward, the planning discipline consists strictly of decision making.

Critical Issues

At this juncture in the planning discipline, quite often it is helpful to identify critical issues; that is, areas in which the institution faces the prospect of getting either much worse or much better. Literally, a "crisis" is the point between life and death, success or failure. Critical issues, therefore, are those issues that must be dealt with if the organization is to survive or to excel in the context of its own stated mission. Usually, these critical issues can be identified only by a thorough reconsideration of the beliefs, the policies, the internal and external analyses, and the assessment of competition.

Identifying the critical issues, then, serves a dual function: (1) It provides an overview of the components of the planning discipline, and (2) through focusing attention on the paramount threats and opportunities, it provides a compelling rationale for the strategic deployment of resources.

Objectives

The statement of objectives is the planning organization's commitment to achieve specific, measurable end results. In essence, the objectives are tied very closely to the

mission statement; in fact, they both spring from and define the mission in specificity of detail. But they also usually represent a direct and positive response to the internal or external analysis, the competition analysis, or the identified critical issues.

Quite simply, the objectives are what the organization must achieve if it is to accomplish its mission and be true to its beliefs. An objective is the transformation of the mission into results. Therefore, objectives should be districtwide and student-centered. Both prudence and good planning demand that the number of objectives be limited. Typically, three or four objectives, if properly written, will capture the vision and stretch required to realize the mission.

Most school districts have great difficulty writing suitable objectives because most educators seem to be more process oriented than result oriented. So most educational planners seem to resist the one requirement of an objective: That is, it must be *measurable*. If an objective is not measurable, it is not an objective but, rather, a dream or fond hope. The idea of "process objectives" is a figment of an inconsequential imagination. Quite obviously, dreams and hopes are not as intimidating as objectives because they incur no risk and contain no built-in demand for accountability. But true objectives create risks and impose ac-

countability. Quite obviously, the following examples of "objectives" are not only typical namby-pamby dodges of both risks and accountability, but are also good examples of warm, fuzzy word games:

- To foster community support by providing opportunities for community involvement.
- To provide programs that will maximize student success.
- To provide a well-qualified, effective staff.
- To serve the whole student.

On the other hand, real objectives are commitments to specific significant results that are measurable in terms of (1) time, (2) money, (3) quality, and (4) quantity. In most cases, at least two of these measures must be present to validate an objective. Examples of such objectives are as follows:

- To graduate 100 percent of our students.
- To have 100 percent of our students within 6 months after graduation either placed in a permanent career or enrolled in an institution of higher learning.
- To have 100 percent of our students achieving at expected achievement levels.
- To increase the District standardized test scores by no less than 1 percent annually.

- To achieve within 18 months a direct, measurable correlation between expenditure and the District mission.
- To improve by 25 percent the public perception of School District Seven by January 1, 19___.
- By 19___, to have 100 percent of our students achieving at expected grade level.
- To increase Districtwide parental/community involvement in the educational process by 50 percent within 2 years.
- To increase by 19___ - ___, the K-12 enrollment 20 percent over projections made in 19___ - ___.

Strategies

Without doubt, the most important part of the planning discipline and, consequently, of the plan itself is the list of strategies. The strategies, after all, are what makes the plan "strategic." They are in particular the articulation of bold commitments to deploy the organization's resources toward the stated objectives. Any and all of the organization's resources — people, facilities, equipment, money — are subject to assignment or reassignment through the strategies.

A "strategy" is not a strategy unless it

represents a significant investment toward an expected significant return. Quite obviously, strategies in themselves are indicative of the organization's basic operational emphasis, its priorities, and the standards by which it will measure its own performance.

It is worthwhile noting that the word "strategy" carries primarily a military connotation. In that context, it refers to an optimistic, pre-planned commitment of resources toward an objective: A wise general chooses strategies that can be expected to achieve the desired results at minimum cost, and then puts everything at his command into them to guarantee that success.

Essentially the strategies tell *how* the organization will accomplish the objectives, therefore realizing the mission. For that reason, the strategy statements, to be manageable and to allow for a practical flexibility as they are translated into action, must here be conceptualized and stated in rather broad terms. Over-specificity or narrow focus reduces the statements to no more than routine operational details and robs the plan of its authority to establish long-term "positioning" of the organization.

Only to the degree that the strategies possess inherent power to move the organization along to its predetermined objectives will the organization enjoy control over its own destiny. No power, no control. And

the power must reside in the strategies themselves, not in the authorities behind them.

Typical strategies for a school district might read as follows:

- We will develop and support a new comprehensive employee wellness program.
- We will redefine and establish program options for non-college-bound students.
- We will establish a comprehensive results-based staff development program.
- We will develop a teacher-mentor ("master teacher") program.
- We will develop a sequential, comprehensive curriculum for all content areas.
- We will organize strategically to accomplish our mission.
- We will put into effect a consistent and manageable system of job accountability and performance standards.

Action Plans

The final component of the planning discipline is the action plans. As the name implies, action plans are a detailed description of the specific actions required to achieve specific results necessary for the

implementation of the strategies. Each strategy will be developed by several such plans, all containing step-by-step directions, time lines, assignments of responsibilities, and cost-benefit analyses.

It is in the action plans that the strategies become operational. In military terminology, action plans are the "tactics." Correspondingly, each action plan has its own specific objectives and must therefore be judged ultimately on the actual results it produces. Action plans that are long on process and short on getting things done are nothing more than a means of postponing dedicated effort and, hence, a denial of accountability.

The development of action plans seems somehow by nature contrary to the basic disposition of most educators. The overwhelming urge and practice is to plan to plan; and, thereby, it is assumed, to postpone action. But an *action* plan is not a plan to plan. It is, rather, evidence that the requisite detailed planning has been done; all that remains is to get on with the action. Furthermore, it should be pointed out here that the action plans are not to be considered, as some have fuzzily thought, the implementation portion of the planning process. Action plans are plans and only plans. Developing them does not constitute implementation; having them does not constitute implementation. Neither does

talking about them in council meetings from time to time. But it is only by implementing the plans that the strategies will be implemented and the objectives achieved.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of an effective action plan is that it is conceived and written from an operational point of view. That means that the content is predicated on progressive, direct cause-and-effect relationships and is immediately workable. Action plans should leave little to the imagination and nothing to chance.

While the format of the action plan may vary depending upon content and performance, to be practical it must include at least: (1) specific reference to the strategy it supports; (2) a statement as to the objective of the action plan itself; (3) a detailed description of each step required to accomplish the plan; (4) an indication of assignments and responsibilities; (5) a time line for the plan; and (6) a cost-benefit analysis. Following are two versions of a recommended format:

PRIORITY: _____ STRATEGY NO. _____
START DATE: _____ PLAN NO. _____
RESPONSIBLE: _____ DATE: _____

ACTION PLAN

TITLE: _____
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: _____

Step No.	Action Step	Responsible	Assigned To	Start Date	Date Due	Date Completed

DATE _____
DRAFT NO. _____

ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE NO. _____ TITLE _____
PROGRAM NO. _____ TITLE _____
ACTION PLAN NO. _____ TITLE _____
PRIME RESPONSIBILITY _____
PURPOSE OF ACTION PLAN _____

Specific Steps	Responsibility	COMPLETION	
		Date Due	Date Completed

The cost-benefit analysis that should accompany each action plan is critical, especially in deciding the final priorities of the strategic plan, because such an analysis ultimately forces the question of best use of resources. For that reason, the degree of accuracy in predicting costs and benefits is the major factor in validating the entire strategic plan in actual performance. That is to say, did the plan produce what it promised at the cost it projected?

There is no single best way to format a cost-benefit analysis. Different undertakings require different methods of explanation; all that is required is that the analysis show what the action will require in both tangible and non-tangible investments, and what the tangible and non-tangible return on investment will be. Following are typical formats:

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ACTION PLAN ____

ACTION PLAN
COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

ACTION PLAN

19__-__ __-__ __-__ __-__ __-__

Tangible Benefits Expected

_____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
_____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
_____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

Intangible Benefits Expected

_____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
_____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
_____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

Expected Costs (direct dollars, use of people's time, additional personnel)

_____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
_____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
_____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

Critical Assumptions on Which Success of Action Plan Is Based (can refer to long-range changes, "soft data" issues, etcetera)

_____
_____
_____
_____

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

COST

ITEM	19__-__	19__-__	19__-__	19__-__	19__-__
Capital Outlay					
Equipment & Supplies					
Personnel					
Transportation					
Other					
Explanation:					

BENEFIT

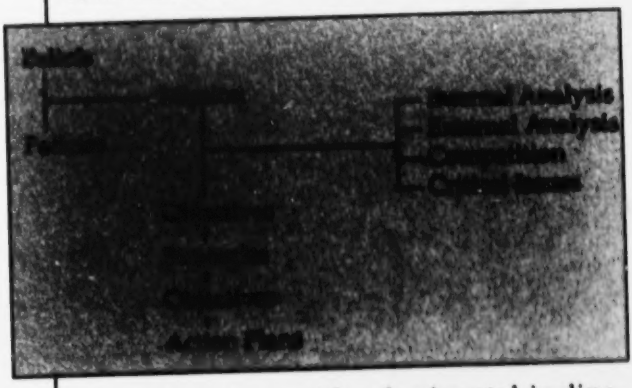
Expense Reduction					
Additional Tax-Based Income					
Additional & Income					
Other					
Intangible Benefits:					

Summary

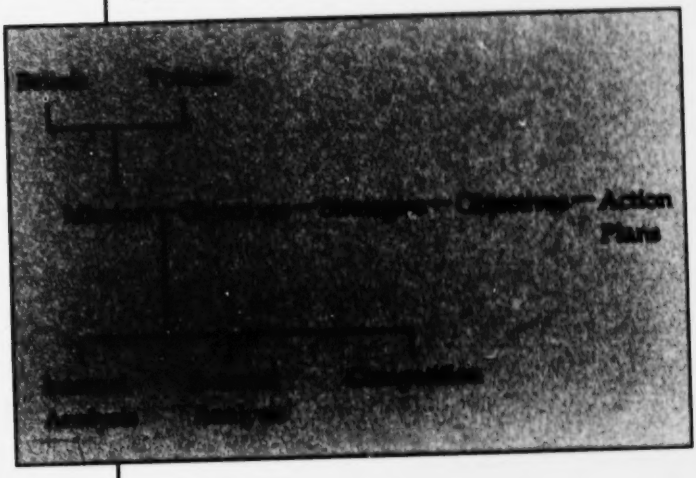
With the action plans in place, the strategic planning discipline is complete, and the logical, progressive decision making forced by the discipline is obvious: Beliefs, Mission, Policies (Internal and External Analy-

ses, Competition), Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans. Taken together, the components of the discipline tell "who," "what," and "how" — who the organization is (Beliefs, Mission, Policies); what it is up to (Objectives); and how it is going to do it (Strategies and Action Plans).

Formatted graphically, the discipline looks like this:



Or for those with a horizontal inclination:



If this appears to be a "model," then it is so only in the nearsighted eye of the beholder. It is, in fact, a fully integrated, dynamic, high-energy discipline by which a significant portion of the future can be created.

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Section V
The Planning Process

The planning *process* is essentially "how" the plan is developed — the means, the methods, and the sequence of planning activities. Typically, the process takes approximately nine months to complete and follows a rather rigid, linear course from beginning to end. But, unlike the *discipline*, which is altered only at the peril of seriously weakening the plan, the process quite often must be adapted to local conditions and requirements in order to achieve material effect.

Yet, even so, the process must never sacrifice its necessary time-on-task, results-oriented character. Never can it be waylaid by convenience or comfort. Ideally, any modification in the process outlined here will be made and agreed upon before the actual process is begun, and set forth as a formatted schedule to which all parties will adhere rigorously. Mid-course changes usually run the risk of both prolonging the process and diluting its substance. The one cardinal rule of every facilitator and participant should be: "Trust the process."

In absolutely every aspect of the process, the main concern must always be the

credibility of the process. If for any reason that credibility is compromised, more is lost than just the plan.

The Facilitator

The first, and sometimes the most difficult, decision to be made in the planning process is in regard to the facilitator. The necessity of a facilitator is a foregone conclusion; no planning process can be accomplished successfully without this functionary. In fact, the quality of any plan depends first and foremost on the personality, group management skills, and technical ability of the facilitator.

The question is whether to use an external or an internal facilitator. That question is not easily resolved because there is not a substantial body of evidence supporting either side. In the private sector, most corporations find, all things being equal, that an external facilitator is more effective in challenging and moving the organization in new directions, as well as imposing the rigors of the planning process on those involved. Even so, most major corporations have a designated full-time "planner" on their staff.

The decision whether to use an internal or external facilitator is strictly a local option, but it must be made carefully, without

presupposition, in light of the advantages of either approach. Briefly, the advantages an *external* facilitator provides are as follows:

1. The professional planner brings an objectivity to the planning process no one inside the organization can possibly enjoy. And this objectivity is necessary if the organization is to: concentrate its attention on the planning process as a serious project — not something someone is handling part-time; face up to critical or sensitive issues in a manner that strengthens relationships and builds mutual self-confidence and *esprit de corps;* and subordinate personal wishes to the good of the organization.

2. The professional planner is more adept at translating the strategic plan into action plans — the point at which most internal planners falter. That is true because no matter how strong the internal planner may be, he or she is still usually identified with his or her own operational responsibility, and usually bailiwicks don't mix.

3. The professional planner, while not a consultant necessarily, is generally a source of "cross-pollination," bringing with him or her to any one organization substantive ideas and techniques that have worked in other instances. His or her academic background, coupled with actual line experience, makes the external facilita-

tor a valuable resource, a provocative catalyst, and a thoroughly unbiased judge of ideas and information.

4. The planning process by its nature excites people and raises their expectations, so it is very important that the process chosen be the one that offers a guarantee of ultimate success. Participants may tend to be disappointed, even a bit cynical, about planning if the first attempt does not meet their expectations.

5. In most instances, the professional planner becomes somewhat of a *confidant* to the superintendent or chief executive officer of the organization and is able to assist him or her, through the planning process, in identifying and developing management talent.

6. Professional planners do not get paid if they do not produce, and they are more easily fired.

The advantages of an *internal* facilitator are as follows:

1. The internal facilitator is immediately available, so the process can be implemented at the convenience of the school district's calendar. This planner is always present to ensure the long-term commitment to the plan and compliance with the discipline and process of planning.

2. The internal planner is already on the payroll, so additional funds for planning do not become a major obstacle to

beginning the process.

3. The internal facilitator is in tune with local issues, concerns, and politics, and so may be able to surface critical matters that may be effectively hidden from an external facilitator.

4. The internal facilitator knows all the players; and the players know the facilitator. Assuming a mutual respect and trust, rapport between facilitator and participants might be more quickly established.

5. The internal facilitator may have planning skills equal to any external facilitator, but that will be true only if the internal planner has had the requisite training and the experience, as well as the commitment to planning as a profession.

Perhaps the most important consideration, however, is the internal facilitator's own assessment of his or her role. To be effective, the internal facilitator must meet at least five basic criteria. He or she must:

1. Report directly to the administrative or executive head of the organization; that is, the superintendent.

2. Have been given the sole responsibility for strategic planning; that is, it must be his or her first job — not an additional duty, and not merely assisting someone else who is the "planner."

3. Have been granted the authority to impose upon the organization a rigid work process and to expect strict compliance.

4. Have good group skills, a forceful personality, and technical knowledge of planning.

5. Not value too highly job security. Planning is risky business.

Setting a Climate for Planning

No strategic planning project should be undertaken without first establishing a receptive climate. Corporate cultures and institutional bureaucracies are by nature resistant to planning because it threatens the status quo and it challenges personal security. Because school districts typically represent a kind of corporate-institutional hybrid, it is doubly important that the design and intent of the strategic planning project, as well as the details of the planning process, be shared with everyone in the district. Special emphasis should be given to the fact that the process potentially will involve anyone and everyone in the district and that the process inherently contains safeguards against special interest dominance, political manipulation, and basic stupidity.

The most effective communication regarding the planning project comes directly from the superintendent and may be accomplished quite well through all the existing methods or instruments. But the most

effective way is a series of special meetings around the district, beginning with the cabinet, to discuss and clarify every aspect of the project.

In addition to communication inside the district, the facilitator or superintendent must wage an intensive effort to inform the community at large about the project. Information packages and interviews should be made available to all the local news media; and, if possible, presentations should be made to civic clubs and other appropriate community groups. Eventually, the strategic planning process will involve and affect the community, so general community awareness and support are invaluable.

Research

The first rule of research is, "Don't overdo it." Strategic planning is not research; it is, rather, decision making based on adequate but not extensive research. The research does not have to be infinite to engender valid decisions. In fact, the best plans are based more on the collective intuition of the planning team than on so-called hard data. A plethora of minutiae merely confounds. Research has become an end unto itself when it postpones or prevents decisions.

Probably the most effective and efficient

way to conduct research for planning in any organization is to limit the research to several "vital" signs. Any human organization, like any human body, has certain health indicators that, when taken together, become a reasonably accurate profile of the organization's total condition and a predictor of its potential for better or for worse. Any professional educator could suggest impromptu a dozen or so such indicators, so there is nothing either revelatory or inclusive about the following list:

- Funding analysis
- Enrollment history and projection
- Achievement scores
- Pupil-teacher ratios
- Expenditure per student
- District demographics
- Staff profile
- Salary and benefit comparisons.

Assuming that the organization is developing a five-year plan, each vital sign should be tracked back for the previous 5 years and then trend-line projected 5 years into the future. These data will serve during planning as reference points to reality.

Also, some more qualitative research data may be helpful in assessing the less tangible, but equally important, aspects of the district.

In no instance should research information or data be allowed to constitute a decision. 142

The Planning Team

Other than the facilitator, the planning team is the most important factor in the planning process. It is this group that will establish the direction and priorities of the organization for years to come and that will monitor, from time to time, the organization's performance toward the plan. Team membership carries with it great honor, but also equally great obligation.

The team must have four characteristics, all equally important. First, it must be in composition both top-down and bottom-up, with reference to the organization's structure. That is, it must by its very make-up mirror the nature of the planning process itself. The entire planning process is a demonstration of the second basic principle of participative management; specifically, that strategic information flows downward, operational information flows upward. The planning team must reflect the same kind of symbiosis, in that it must be made up of people who have "strategic" responsibility as well as people whose responsibilities are "operational." Exactly where the line of demarcation falls is an academic question. Practically speaking, those drawn at the top of the traditional organizational chart are "strategic" — they are charged by position with establishing

overall direction, policies, objectives, and the deployment of resources. Those toward the bottom are more or less responsible for implementation. The planning team has no formal organizational structure and operates without a chairperson. The facilitator must provide that function.

Because the team is indeed one for "strategic" planning, the team membership will usually be skewed toward the top. Typically, one-third to one-half of the team members will hold upper management positions in the organization. That emphasis is not only proper; it is necessary.

Second, the planning team must represent every component of the school community. For example, it should include representatives from: administration of every building level, department managers, certified staff from each level (and discipline, if possible), classified staff, community, parents, teachers union, and students. The word "represent" is used here with a very qualified meaning. The team members *do not* represent their constituents in any political or local sense. They are a part of the team because they represent certain values and perspectives that must be taken under consideration if the strategic plan is to be indeed comprehensive and if it is to garner support from throughout the school community.

Third, the planning team must be man-

ageable in size. Typically, the planning team consists of twenty to twenty-five members — no more; fewer if possible. Usually, in a school district, they are selected from volunteers by the superintendent and the board president with the advice of the facilitator. Selection from volunteers, of course, presupposes that the entire school community has been provided adequate information regarding the purpose and process of the planning activity. The drafting of participants is also appropriate and sometimes necessary to ensure depth and breadth of the team.

As the selection of members is being made, one other required characteristic of the team must be kept paramount — the personality mix. In most districts, it would be possible to put together any number of teams that would meet the strict composition requirements. But mere mechanical ordering of types will guarantee failure. Ultimately, the planning team will develop its own culture, so it is of the utmost importance that each member be (1) a person of good will, (2) articulate, and (3) willing to pursue consensus. In the end, there can be no special interests — only common interest; and defensiveness must give way to decision. All of this is for a reason: The planning team, and the facilitator, must be committed to the proposition that if people of good will are brought to face the truth,

they will make the right decision every time.

The First Planning Session

The most significant activity during the entire planing process is the first planning session. During this time of three to four days, the planning team develops every component of the planning discipline except the action plans. Essentially, whatever results from this meeting becomes the plan. And even though everything about the plan is still subject to development and testing by the action teams and to approval by the board, each part of the discipline must be approached and concluded with the assumption of finality.

That means that the components of the discipline (beliefs, mission, policies, internal analysis, external analysis, critical issues, objectives, and strategies) cannot be seen as independent or non-sequential entities — but rather as a progressive, logical thought sequence through which the whole plan evolves. This sequence must be strictly transformed into the meeting agenda. To alter the order of thought is to risk compromising both the integrity and effect of the plan. While it is desirable, even necessary, to vary the working organizational arrangements of the team, the rational and

creative processes, as well as the pace, it must be remembered that unjustified variations or mere cuteness quickly results in distraction and confusion. It also should be noted that, while complication may be a necessary pre-condition of simplification, simplification is not a necessary consequence of complication.

Management of the Team

The most important function of the facilitator is keeping the team true to the planning discipline. The first sure sign of an amateur facilitator is trusting one's own genius rather than the discipline. The simple fact is, the discipline does not fail; facilitators do.

The second most important function of the facilitator is to keep the team's attention focused on the tasks at hand. The initial planning session must be an isolated, high-intensity, time-on-task concentration of intelligence, energy, and emotion. Experience has proved that far more can be accomplished by this method than by any number of traditional committee meetings held conveniently over several months. Forcing the proceedings into the strict time limitation of thirty to thirty-six hours over three days achieves several results critical to good strategic planning:

1. The total mental saturation with every aspect of the district has a way of compelling coherence in thinking and also of sparking new thoughts.

2. The sense of urgency imposes a necessary judgment on the importance of issues and concerns and separates out those that are not critical to strategic planning.

3. The ardent, prolonged group interaction, along with fatigue, raises the deliberations to a level generally void of pretense, intimidation, and self or special interests.

4. Time for political manipulation is not available.

5. The return on effort is manifestly superior to expectations.

The facilitator must be a stern, yet congenial — even charming — taskmaster, exacting compliance to both schedule and group processes, never arguing, never doubting. The facilitator, without becoming overbearing or suppressing participation, must establish from the start his or her control over the group and must maintain that control throughout the planning session. The best control is the facilitator's own example of disciplined behavior and thinking, and commitment to the common purpose of the group. Facilitation is not a role for autocrats, bureaucrats, wimps, or pompous poseurs.

The facilitator is, in the highest sense of

the word, a "leader"; the role is best served by those who by dint of their own character, commitment, and personality compel others to follow. Unfortunately, anyone who is or who is considered "The Boss" (the superintendent, for example) usually is not effective as a facilitator. The authority invariably gets in the way of both *full expression* and *group consensus;* and these two things are vital to the initial planning session.

Challenge and Orientation

The initial planning session is best begun with an evening session, perhaps after dinner, in which the facilitator presents briefly both the "why" and "how" of strategic planning. Typically, the discussion of the urgency for planning will address the various, somewhat global aspects of change, such as: the transition from the information age to the age of bio-technology, the transformation of values, increasing competition in a free market, and evolving demographic trends. The object of this presentation is not as much to inform as to stimulate an appreciation of the scope and possible implications of strategic planning; not to frighten or discourage, but to excite with the discovery of opportunity. After all, the best strategic plans come out of aspiration, not desperation.

The discussion regarding the "how" of planning typically first establishes the basic philosophy of planning; that is, the planners are causes and not effects. The planning team members must feel that they are indeed "change agents."

Then the discussion should provide a brief explanation of both the complete process and the discipline, with particular emphasis on the role of the planning team. The team should know that it is a recommending body without official authority beyond the strength of its own recommendations. Yet, its members must realize the necessity of reaching definite conclusions and providing specific direction for the district. The mere generation of options does not constitute planning. And, finally, the planning team should be made to understand the absolute necessity for an open, honest, participatory approach to its task.

Developing the Components of the Plan

The actual process of the initial planning session depends primarily on the personality and skill of the facilitator, and secondarily on the personality and skill of the team. And the facilitator must seek constantly to adapt each to the other, not merely as the dynamics of the process require, but especially as the process offers opportunity for

mutual growth. The best plans evolve correspondingly with the growth of the team toward unity of purpose and effort.

Even so, the entire process must have an overall rigid structure to assure both efficiency and effectiveness. The structure has four dimensions: *group sets, group processes, decision-making processes,* and *timing.* "Group sets" refers to the sub-organization of the planning team into at least two variations (or sets) of approximately five-person teams. For this purpose, the group size should be not fewer than four persons, no more than six. The ideal number is five. And the sets, insofar as possible, should provide a complete differentiation of group memberships.

"Group processes" refers to the progressive interaction of the members of the group toward its objective and the roles that individual members play in the movement of the group (group dynamics). It is extremely helpful if the facilitator can recognize and respond appropriately to the various roles that people play in a group: building, maintenance, and blocking (Appendix I). "Group processes" also refers to the management style demonstrated by the group. It is assumed that all groups will naturally assume a participative style; however, if the group shows signs of succumbing to an autocratic personality or of deteriorating into laissez-faire confusion, the facilitator

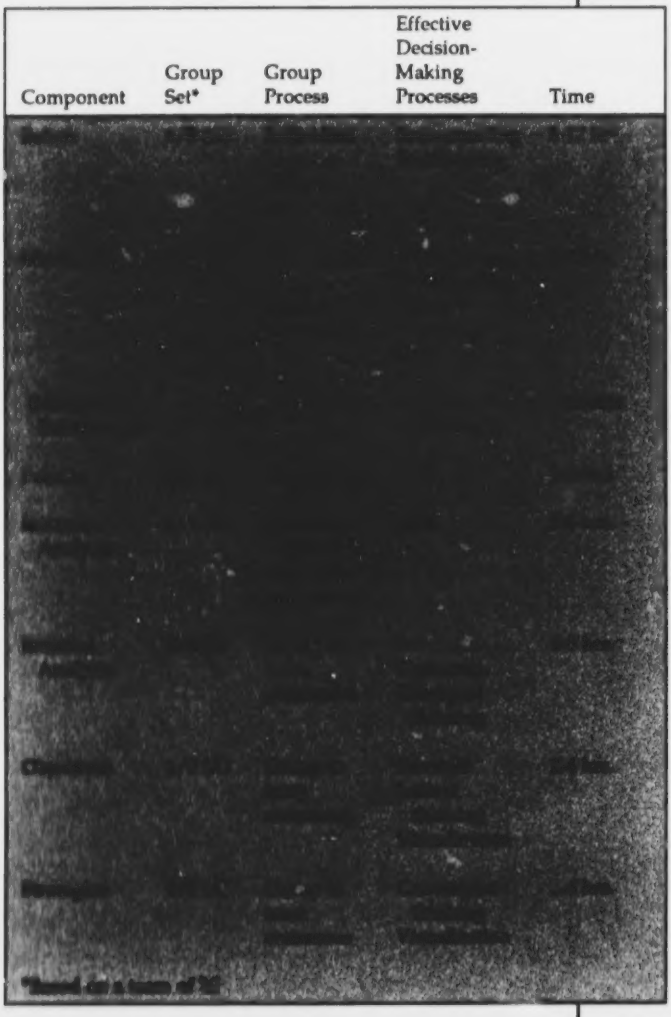
must provide immediate and pointed counseling. The facilitator must constantly, yet unobtrusively, monitor the working groups in order to guarantee their good progress. Usually, a gentle reminder is enough to get wayward groups back in concert.

"Decision-making processes" of course refers to those commonly accepted rational and creative approaches to either creating or discovering decisions. The traditional *rational* methods are induction, deduction, and analogy. Among the most popular *creative* methods are brainstorming, morphological analysis, force fit, brainwriting, visualization (excursion), lists (attributes), lateral thinking (challenge), and convergent and divergent thinking. The planning process, by its nature, demands the extensive use of the creative approaches; however, the creative, if it is to be realized, constantly must be tested, supported, and ultimately proved by the rational. When creativity outpaces innovation, the plan drifts away into fantasy.

"Timing," of course, refers to the order and time limit to which each group task must be subjected. Only one task is exempt; and that is the refining of the mission statement, if necessary, by an *ad hoc* group formed by one member from each of the sub-groups. That particular group works separately from the other proceedings and

continues until the total planning team is satisfied with the statement.

The following paradigm depicts the overall group management recommended for developing the components of the planning discipline.



Communicating the Plan

The success of a strategic plan depends upon its credibility among the total organization. The best way to guarantee that credibility, assuming the efficacy of the plan itself, is immediate, full, and open presentation of every component of the plan as it has been drafted by the planning team to everyone involved in the organization. Quite likely, even prior to the selection of the planning team, the strategic planning project received considerable publicity both inside and outside the organization. And the initial planning session created a great deal of interest, curiosity, and perhaps even some anxiety. So the sooner the results of that session can be made public, the better.

In larger districts, this is accomplished internally by a series of round-robin meetings at strategic locations. In smaller districts, perhaps a single presentation at a general convocation is more appropriate. The facilitator or the superintendent, or both, should make the presentation. It is highly desirable that a board member from the planning team and other team members be present.

Every component of the plan, exactly as developed by the planning team, should be *shown* (by overhead projector) and *discussed;* usually it is not generally distrib-

uted. After all, this is a draft of the plan, and as such should not be subjected to mass undisciplined scrutiny of its particulars. The ensuing process will allow for full examination and critique, but in appropriate ways and by responsible people. A general distribution at this point runs the risk of ideas and statements being taken out of context and thus distracting productive effort in inconsequential wrangling over details.

If the decision is made to distribute the plan, as some districts have done, only the beliefs, mission, policies, objectives, and strategies should be disseminated — never the internal or external analyses.

A special courtesy presentation of the plan should be made at this time to the board of education. However, this presentation is for its information only. It must not be taken as an occasion for the board to critique, approve, or disapprove. The board must willingly suspend its judgment until the plan is complete in every respect and is submitted in final draft for approval.

Building Action Teams

The communication of the plan to the various constituents of the organization is necessary not only to guarantee the immediate and accurate flow of information, it

also serves as an opportunity to solicit members for the action teams. At each presentation of the plan, the facilitator should discuss the formation of action teams (one for each strategy), the teams' critical role in the development of the plan, and the manner in which the teams will be selected. At the conclusion of each presentation, the opportunity should be provided for persons to volunteer to serve and to express a preference as to strategy assignment. The facilitator may also find it desirable to actually "conscript" certain people to serve on the team.

When all the names and preferences are collected, the planning team (or, more likely, an *ad hoc* group from the team) meets to put together the action teams and to designate the action team leaders. Of course, they should honor individual preferences as much as possible, but the main purpose of this exercise is to build strong, objective, committed teams who are a sort of "mini" version (typically, 10-25 members) of the planning team itself. Here again, the credibility of the planning process is of paramount concern. Teams obviously dominated by special interests or riddled with perceived incompetence are automatically suspect and, consequently, disregarded by others in the district.

The final action teams' membership and leadership should be approved by the en-

tire planning team, the superintendent, and the board.

Action Team Work

The action team phase of the planning process is critical to the strategic plan. It is during this time that specific, operational plans of action are developed to implement the strategies. A failure here means a failure of the strategy. The action teams will not implement the plans, but the plans they develop will contain such specific detail that they can be easily carried out when operationally assigned. That means that the plans cannot be just "plans to plan," but outlines of specific, detailed actions necessary to accomplish the strategy. Typically, each strategy will require a dozen or so plans.

The action teams begin their work only after the facilitator has provided the team leaders, usually as a group, with comprehensive and detailed instruction regarding the action teams' responsibilities. Usually accomplished in a two- or three-hour session, the instruction includes: (1) the role of the action team leader, (2) the relationship between the strategies and the action plans, (3) an explanation of the action plan form, (4) an explanation of cost-benefit analysis, (5) the relationship of the action teams to the

planning team regarding final approval of the action plans, and (6) the time commitment usually required (typically, twenty hours of meeting time — at convenient intervals of one-to three-hour sessions — plus an indeterminate amount of time outside meetings). If specific training or instruction is required by any or all of the team leaders, the facilitator should see that it is provided as soon as possible.

It is particularly critical that the action team leader understand that the action team must honor the strategy exactly as it is written. That is, the action team must accept the strategy with the full intention of making it work — not with the intent to change or eliminate it. However, if it turns out that, after demonstrated good faith effort, the strategy must be altered, then the action team is duty-bound to make the appropriate recommendations to the planning team through the facilitator and, upon approval, proceed to develop the revised strategy.

The first meeting of each action team should produce a general time line for the team's activities, an outline of possible action plans they will pursue, and any internal organization of the team according to tasks. Notes or minutes from this meeting and all subsequent meetings should be forwarded to the facilitator. The teams will be allowed to steer a rather independent

course, adopt their own management style, and conduct their activities at the convenience of the group. Each team should be encouraged by the facilitator to work in isolation from the other action teams; there should be no attempt to coordinate or merge activities or plans. If any consolidation is appropriate, it will be done by the planning team at its second session.

During the three or four months the action teams are at work, the facilitator must effectively monitor, discipline, stimulate, and support the teams' efforts. Some of the ways the facilitator functions during this time include: (1) coordinating meeting times and places for all teams, (2) providing various clerical and other support services, (3) arranging for release time or additional compensation, and (4) being available to answer specific questions or provide personal assistance when necessary. Most importantly, the facilitator must meet formally with each team (or team leader) once each month to assess progress and to project upcoming requirements. Finally, the facilitator must ensure that the action plans and cost-benefit analyses submitted by each team are in the appropriate form for submission to the planning team. (Appendix 2)

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The Second Planning Session

At the conclusion of the action planning phase, the planning team conducts its second and final session (two to three days) to put into draft form the complete strategic plan. This session does not demand the physical isolation that was so crucial to the first session; nevertheless, the meeting should be held off-campus at some convenient, neutral site. Nor does the intensity of this meeting equal that of the first. The pace is slower, more deliberate, but still subject to the discipline of a fairly strict schedule.

The first order of business is to review all the action plans that have been submitted by the action teams. Ideally, the members of the planning team have each received a complete package of the action plans, along with evaluation forms, at least one week before the session; so the review should proceed apace. To facilitate the review, each action team leader makes a scheduled appearance (one hour or so) before the planning team to clarify, explain, or justify the team's recommendations. The team leaders do not attend any other portion of this session.

Usually, the planning team is well advised to withhold any comment on, and especially any evaluation of, the plans until all have been presented by the action team leaders. Reserving judgment saves time

and ego and contributes mightily to the quality of the final product.

After all presentations have been made, the planning team then begins its assessment of each plan and through consensus makes a final disposition of every one. Since the planning team alone is ultimately responsible for developing a realistic, visionary strategic plan, the team has several options regarding disposition of any and all of the action plans:

- It can accept a plan *carte blanche*.
- It can reject a plan outright.
- It can send a plan back to the action team for revisions.
- It can reject any part of a plan and accept the rest.

There are two things the planning team cannot do. The first thing the planning team *cannot* do is put any plan on hold; each and every one must be dealt with by some definitive action. The second thing the planning team *cannot* do is add to an action plan; planning teams *do not* write action plans.

In addition to reviewing and selecting action plans to support the strategies, the planning team usually finds this an appropriate time to review again every component of the plan (starting with *beliefs*) just to confirm its own satisfaction with the content and coherence of the total plan.

The final task of the planning team is to develop a recommended schedule of im-

plementation for the strategies and plans, including a year-by-year cost projection. Usually, this is put in rough draft by the entire planning team, refined by a smaller *ad hoc* group working with the finance director, and approved by the entire team before submission to the board as a part of the plan.

As with the first planning session, the planning facilitator is the person who is responsible first, for moving this planning session to the necessary ends; second, for the construction and validation of the implementation and cost schedule; and third, for transforming everything into a final draft ready for board consideration.

Board Approval

One critical point: Prior to submission of the plan to the board, the facilitator must observe two serious matters of protocol, if not obligation. The first is the apprisal of all the action teams as to the final disposition of their recommendations, and the dissolution of the teams. This can be accomplished most easily by a review meeting with the action team leaders who in turn can inform their respective teams and, at the same time, announce the dissolution of the action teams. The second responsibility of the facilitator is the submission of the total stra-

tegic plan to the superintendent for his or her formal endorsement. This should be a mere formality because of the superintendent's active involvement in every part of the planning process, but the plan should not be submitted to the board without the commitment of a formal endorsement by the superintendent.

This presentation of the strategic plan to the board should be made by the facilitator at the behest of the superintendent, usually in two study sessions. Of course, both the planning team and the action teams should be encouraged to attend these sessions, but only the planning team should be granted the status of "official" access to the board, and then only in response to board inquiry through the facilitator. There must not be any direct interaction between the board and individuals speaking as action team members. The plan under consideration is the property of and the recommendation of the planning team and should be dealt with accordingly.

Very seldom does a board significantly alter any portion of the plan. That is not to say that it merely "rubber stamps" it, but its quick and full approval is merely evidence of both the quality of the plan and the effective communication that has existed throughout the entire process. It is the facilitator's job to make sure the board is neither painted into a corner nor surprised.

Implementation

Most strategic plans that fail do so at the point of implementation. The whole intent of strategic planning is to translate ideas into action, but that inevitably proves to be an exceedingly difficult and sometimes impossible undertaking. It is so for a variety of reasons: inertia, resistance, operational distractions, and confusion of accountabilities — just to mention a few.

The first requirement for successful implementation, assuming a workable plan, is the emphatic and relentless support of the plan from those at the top of the organization, particularly the chief executive officer. Strategic plans rise and fall with the leadership of the superintendent. The superintendent must view the strategic plan as the overarching *schema* that provides the context for all existing and proposed activities within the district, and everything must be judged by its compliance with the plan.

The second essential requirement in translating plans into action is the thorough fusion of the action plans into the individual job accountabilities of at least all management personnel. This process achieves two results, one quite serendipitously. The first, obviously, is that every action plan is assigned to someone for implementation; the second is that, if properly structured, the process offers an excellent means of de-

veloping objective performance standards and consequent performance evaluations, rather than the sneaky, subjective mish-mash which passes — so often argumentatively — as employee evaluation. The first is the concern of the facilitator. The second should be the concern of the superintendent because, if properly carried out, the resulting accountability system would ensure that everything done in the district is consistent with and supportive of the district's mission and objectives and can be measured in terms of its contribution thereto. At this point *strategic planning* becomes *strategic management*.

Admittedly, this approach is not very popular in organizations given to process rather than results. One bright, young high school principal, when confronted with the prospect of accountabilities, remarked to his colleagues, "I will not write down anything today for which I will be held accountable later." He should be fired without hesitation or compunction. Without strict accountabilities, the strategic plan very quickly becomes a mere adjunct to "normal" operation, and action plans assigned otherwise are usually considered just one of many "other duties as assigned." Quite simply, as the high school principal stated, nothing will be done.

There is a real, philosophical debate over the use of job accountabilities in this

fashion. One significant body of opinion holds that job descriptions of all administrators should be fast and secure in a filing cabinet, the strategic plan in another; and that the two should never meet. The fact is that, unless one is translated into the other, there exist neither job descriptions or strategic plan.

The most effective, though not least painful, way to accomplish this is through the use of a very simple form which identifies the three aspects of all jobs: (1) job components, (2) results or rationale associated with each component, and (3) either minimum standards or specific objectives in each result area. (Appendix 3)

The development of these accountabilities should proceed, under the direction of the facilitator, like this:

1. Specific action plans are assigned by the appropriate authority to each administrator or manager.

2. The administrator or manager, with the assistance of the planning facilitator, identifies his or her own job components — the total range of responsibilities.

3. The administrator or manager states the basic rationale (results) associated with each component.

4. The administrator or manager identifies the minimum standards (or specific objectives) in each result area, being careful to note when applicable the specific action

plan to which the result applies.

5. The administrator or manager negotiates upward to establish specific "prior mutual expectations" of job performance.

Once the accountabilities are agreed upon, then quarterly reviews should be held to assess both individual performance and the progress of the plan. These reviews should be conducted by all administrators or managers of their subordinates, just as in any other management review system. But the purpose of the reviews should not be to "evaluate" performance in the traditional sense of the word; it is, rather, to adjust performance to the accountabilities and, if necessary, the accountabilities to the performance.

Effective quarterly reviews are the most expeditious means of both realizing and controlling the strategic plan. If these reviews are properly structured and carried out, the superintendent, the facilitator, and everyone else in the district will know at any given time the status of any given action plan and its strategy. That allows the superintendent and other administrators, including the board, to manage to the strategic plan, and that is tantamount to the total concentration of effort on the mission and objectives of the district. And that, after all, is what strategic planning is supposed to be.

The Annual Updates

Strategic planning is not an event; it is a way of life for any successful organization. That is why annual updates of the strategic plan are vital not only to the plan but to the organization itself. In fact, the first annual update is the most important part of the planning process for several reasons. First, the fact that it occurs represents a genuine commitment by management to strategic planning; so, if there is any lingering hope that it might simply go away as other fads, that notion is dashed. Second, by subjecting the plan to a new reality, it achieves a revalidation of priorities and is strengthened in credibility. Third, because much of the plan will have been already accomplished, it generally gains a narrower focus which means even more intense concentration of effort on probably even more significant objectives. And fourth, the first annual update should be scheduled to allow the planning process to get in sync with the budgeting process; so, from this year on, the organization should be able to budget its plan, not plan its budget.

The process of the annual updates is very similar to the initial planning session. The original planning team, or a reasonable facsimile, meets for two to three days in seclusion and, under the guidance of the facilitator, follows a slightly modified ver-

sion of its first session. The same components of the plan are addressed; the major difference is that components are developed in a different order. Typically, the annual update proceeds as follows:

1. Internal analysis (with emphasis on changes in past year)
2. External analysis (with emphasis on changes in past year)
3. Critical issues
4. Review of beliefs
5. Review of mission
6. Review of policies
7. Critical issues
8. Review of objectives
9. Review of strategies

Of course, as the reviews are conducted, revisions, deletions, and additions are made as appropriate.

Should additional strategies be written, as they most assuredly will be, they are assigned to action teams, as before, for development. The process from that point through implementation is merely a condensed version of the first, managed for the most part by the planning facilitator, but made operational as soon as possible.

If the process of strategic planning is viewed thus as both linear and cyclical, the concept of strategic management becomes a reality; and the driving force of the organization becomes its own intent. Some say it's risky business; but it's not half as risky as

the alternative.

APPENDIX 1

Groups — The Roles People Play*

Group Blocking Roles

The Aggressor
- Deflates status of others in group
- Disagrees with others aggressively
- Criticizes others in group

The Blocker
- Stubbornly disagrees and rejects others' views
- Cites unrelated personal experiences
- Returns to topics already resolved

The Withdrawer
- Will not participate
- Is a "wool gatherer"
- Carries on private conversations within group
- Is a self-appointed taker of notes

The Recognition Seeker
- Tries to show his importance through boasting and excessive talking
- Is overly conscious of his status

* *Adapted from materials developed by the American Management Association.*

The Topic Jumper
- Continually changes the subject

The Dominator
- Tries to take over the meeting
- Tries to assert authority
- Tries to manipulate group

The Special Interest Pleader
- Uses the group's time to draw attention to his or her own concerns

The Playboy
- Wastes the group's time in showing off, telling funny stories, and the like
- Acts with nonchalance or cynicism

The Self-Confessor
- Talks irrelevantly about his own feelings and insights

The Devil's Advocate
- When he is more devil than advocate

Group Building Roles

The Initiator
- Suggests new or different ideas for discussion
- Proposes new or different approaches to problems

The Opinion Giver

- States pertinent beliefs about what the group is considering and others' suggestions

The Elaborator

- Elaborates or builds on suggestions made by others

The Clarifier

- Gives relevant examples
- Offers rationales
- Probes for meaning and understanding of matters under discussion
- Restates problems

The Tester

- Raises questions to "test out" whether the group is ready to come to a decision

The Summarizer

- Tries to pull together or reviews the discussion content

Group Maintenance Roles

The Tension Reliever

- Uses humor at appropriate times to draw off negative feelings
- Calls for a break at appropriate times

The Compromiser

- Does not stick stubbornly to his or her point of view, but is willing to yield when necessary for the progress of group

The Harmonizer

- Mediates differences of opinion
- Reconciles points of view

The Encourager

- Praises and supports others in their contributions
- Is friendly and encouraging

The Gate Keeper

- Keeps communications open
- Creates opportunities to encourage participation by others

APPENDIX 2

A Cost-Benefit Analysis Guide

Developed by Karen S. Angello, Ph.D.

Steps in Conducting a Cost-Benefit Analysis

Work with one Action Plan at a time. You might request people to have thought through the costs and benefits and have prepared a list before the meeting.

For each Action Plan:

1. Set up a large chart and divide:

Costs	Benefits

2. Use formal brainstorming and response in turn to share possible costs.

3. Ask for clarification (response in turn).

4. Optional (Use weighted voting for significant costs). Scale 1-5.

5. Use formal brainstorming and response in turn to share possible benefits.

6. Ask for clarification (response in turn).

7. Optional (Use weighted voting for significant costs). Score 1-5.

8. Optional (Subtract costs total from benefit totals). If a minus number occurs it would be appropriate not to proceed with this plan unless the identified problems can be rectified.

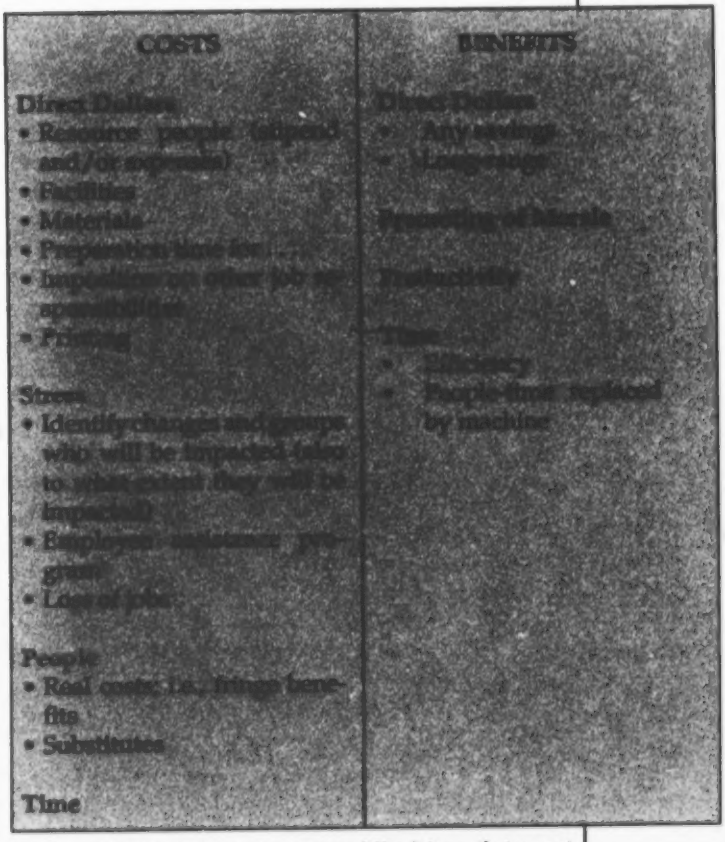
9. Discuss the results and gain consensus on the costs and benefits listed.

10. It will now be necessary to compute the costs and benefits into actual dollar amounts. Do attempt to measure "soft areas," i.e., what can increased stress/distress lead to (absenteeism, discipline problems)?

    This part of the process may take some additional research. If the first year imposes a large cost but will create savings in subsequent years, show with hard data. Be as detailed as possible to support your plan.

11. When all data is ready, transfer to the Action Plan — Cost-Benefit Analysis sheet. The optional steps in the procedure will assist you in working with soft data.

    NOTE: You may need to assign Action Plans in subgroups in order to complete this procedure.



NOTE: Need to find ways to measure difficult items that are not hard data, such as actual dollars. "Soft areas" could be measured in terms of absenteeism, more discipline, discussions in faculty lounges.

APPENDIX 3

Job Accountabilities & Performance Standards

I Do This: (Activities)	So That: (Results)	Minimum Standards (Objectives) Are Achieved When:
• Total job components • Areas of responsibility • Result areas	• Must be controllable • Must be measurable in terms of 1 - Time 2 - Money 3 - Quality 4 - Quantity • Must be consistent with strategic plan • Lack of meaningful results invalidates the job activity	• Specific measures in terms of time, money, quality, and/or quantity for each result • Standards state minimum acceptable performance • Objectives indicate desired performance

Job Accountabilities & Performance Standards

I Do This: (Activities)	So That: (Results)	Minimum Standards (Objectives) Are Achieved When:
I. Select, assign and evaluate staff (Classified and instructional)	I. A. Each staff member is assigned to his/her area of expertise and certification	I. Strategic Plan-II, XI a. Each position is filled with a qualified person b. Personnel files include copies of licenseS, certificates, diplomas, and other required credentials
II. Execute staff development	II. A. A comprehensive staff development program is provided	II. Strategic Plan-XIII a. All staff members meet required inservice b. Professional growth plans are developed as a result of evaluator c. Staff receive recognition (awards and incentives) d. Evaluations reflect an average or above rating
III. Guarantee student learning	III. A. Students continue to develop a thinking frame-work to organize knowledge acquired B. Textbooks, equipment, and instructional supplies support the instructional process C. Curriculum meets all students needs	III. Strategic Plan-IX, X, XII a. Schoolwide BSF and standardize test scores show improvement over the past year in all areas b. 95% of students achieve average and above a. State textbook adoption requirements are met b. Current adopted textbook is provided in all subjects c. 95% of needed instructional equipment, media, and supplies are provided d. Equipment is in good repair a. All mandated subjects are sequentially taught b. All curriculum decisions (non-mandated) result from staff input c. Each student is placed and taught on his/her instructional level

Job Accountabilities & Performance Standards

I Do This: (Activities)	So That: (Results)	Minimum Standards (Objectives) Are Achieved When:
III. (Continued)	III. D. Instruction is systematically planned, implemented, and evaluated	III. a. Students, performing below or above average consistently, have an intensified program (Chapter I, Special education, etc.) b. 95% of available instruction time is used for instruction c. 100% of students' needs are met as a result of individual assessment
	E. Planned, clear, consistent daily schedule meets or exceeds minimum requirements	a. 95% of student time is spent on task b. Every staff member has the required planning time c. No conflicts in use of facilities occur
IV. Create and maintain school climate	IV. A. Learning environment promotes excellence	IV. a. Schoolwide student performance reflects improvement in all areas compared to last year b. Incidents of vandalism decrease compared to previous year c. Student attendance rate is 97% and above, 8 out of 10 months d. Classroom space meets minimum standards
	B. A safe environment is maintained	a. State and local requirements are met b. All equipment in use (indoor and outdoor) is in good repair at all times c. Students are supervised at all times d. Safety procedures are posted and followed e. Lesson plans include safety objectives
	C. Health standards are met	a. All federal, state, and local standards are met b. Building sanitation rate meets minimum requirements c. Student physical health requirements are met as evidenced by health records

Job Accountabilities & Performance Standards

I Do This: (Activities)	So That: (Results)	Minimum Standards (Objectives) Are Achieved When:
V. Develop school goals and objectives	V. A. Clear, measurable, and result-oriented directions exist	V. a. School goals are written b. Annual review assures goals and objectives are met c. Improvement plans reflect parent, staff, and community participation d. Plan of action for improvement is written and implemented e. School policies and procedures are written
VI. Promote public relations	VI. A. Community supports school programs	VI. Strategic Plan-III, VII, VIII a. Community volunteers increase services and financial support to school b. 95% of children in school zone enroll in K-3 grades c. Fewer than 7 students seek transfer to out-of-zone schools
	B. Mass media is used	a. At least three media resources (TV, radio, newspapers) are used
VII. Control and manage school budget	VII. A. Maximum benefits are achieved within resources	VII. Strategic Plan-XI a. All available resources are used to improve instructions b. Resources are allocated fairly within and among classes to meet student needs
	B. Organized principles are the basis for managing funds	a. All federal, state, and local requirements are met b. Audit is free of exceptions c. Records provide current, accurate, and complete disclosure of funds
	C. Plans project future financial needs	a. Future projects requiring finance are assessed and written b. Written request for needs is submitted to superordinates

Job Accountabilities & Performance Standards

I Do This: (Activities)	So That: (Results)	Minimum Standards (Objectives) Are Achieved When:
VIII. Promote positive functioning in group setting	VIII. A. Assertive discipline is enforced	VIII. Strategic Plan-XV a. All staff actively implement assertive discipline techniques b. Disciplinary referrals decrease to less than 10% of total enrollment
	B. Students make positive steps toward cooperative group interaction	a. All students demonstrate knowledge of expectations b. Students verbalize satisfaction with being in school
	C. Daily operations reflect planned structure	a. All rooms are well organized b. Staff demonstrate knowledge of responsibilities during daily activities, special events, and changes
IX. Provide leadership	IX. A. Management system ensures proper planning and efficient operation	IX. Strategic Plan-II, III, IV, VI, XI, XII, XV a. Staff and parents work together to establish and endorse specific objectives b. Written plans are used to incorporate all planning information
	B. School environment is conducive to learning	a. Students are challenged to move forward one grade each year b. School achieve local and state recognition
	C. Innovative practices are implemented by staff	a. Total staff share ideas and perform assignments b. Staff participate in innovative projects
X. Ensure home/school relations	X. A. Parents form a partnership with staff	X. Strategic Plan-VIII a. 10% of parents volunteer in daily school activities b. Organized P.T.A. Unit c. 85% of parents become P.T.A. participants d. Each parent participates in at least one school activity during a school year e. 10% more parents participate in parenting skills workshops compared to last school year

Job Accountabilities & Performance Standards

I Do This: (Activities)	So That: (Results)	Minimum Standards (Objectives) Are Achieved When:
X. (Continued)	X. B. Parents take an active role in student education	X. a. 98% of students complete homework b. Parents of students who perform below average conference, plan, and participate in activities to improve student's performance c. Parents accompany teachers/students on at least three field trips during school year
XI. Establish and maintain two-way communication	XI. A. There is an internal record system that provides needed information	XI. Strategic Plan-VI, VII a. Written evidence on file indicates that reports are generated as scheduled to superordinates, boards, councils, and staff 100% of the time b. Reports (financial, minutes of meetings, letters and memos, schedules, logs inventories, policy manuals, announcements, advertisements, newsletters) provide accurate information about program activities progress toward objectives 100% of the time c. All records are current and complete 100% of the time
	B. Information is shared on timely basis	a. A variety of written formal (policies, progress reports, minutes of meetings, plans, manuals) and informal (announcements, memoranda notes, surveys, questionnaires, etc.) mechanisms are used for communication
	C. Staff, parents and community have opportunity for input and feedback concerning school programs and activities	a. Sign-in sheets and minutes of all meetings reflect that staff, parents, and community participated in planning b. Staff advisory groups meet once each month to help define solutions to school concerns

Job Accountabilities & Performance Standards

I Do This: (Activities)	So That: (Results)	Minimum Standards (Objectives) Are Achieved When:
XII. Achieve personal/ professional growth	XII. A. Maintain a knowledge level of current educational trends and innovations	XII. Strategic Plan-II a. Spend a minimum of two hours a week reading or listening to professional literature
	B. Participate in positive networking with peers	a. Attend and participate in a minimum of six professional meetings (administrators round table and study councils) b. Share/discuss ideas and assist others with projects
	C. Increase self-satisfaction	a. Initiate innovative ideas at my school b. Show enthusiasm and satisfaction with my job c. Evaluate my strengths and areas of needed improvement d. Increase the number of Reading Is Fundamental Projects in City School

About the Author

Bill Cook is director of Cambridge Management Group, Inc., a firm specializing in strategic planning and management development for educational clients throughout the United States.

A native Alabamian, he holds an A.B. from Jacksonville State University and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Auburn University. A distinguished military graduate, he served three and one-half years as a regular army officer with the Second Infantry Division; his last assignment was company commander.

After his military tour, for over twelve years he was affiliated with Auburn University and rose to the rank of vice-president and associate professor. During this tenure, he served the university in various capacities including department head and division chairman. He was on the team that designed and opened Auburn's Montgomery campus; and subsequently directed the efforts that led to the institution's accreditation through the master's level in four years. In addition he was a member of several statewide and health councils and served for three years as president of the Montgomery Area Community Health Sciences Institute. During this time also, he chaired or served on various accrediting

committees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

In 1975, he resigned his position at Auburn to pursue a career in business, and for two years served as vice-president and assistant to the president of Hudson-Thompson, a major food distribution company. While there, he directed the company in a two-year strategic repositioning and reorganization. In 1977, he founded his present company.

Bill Cook has served on the Humanities Advisory Council at Auburn, the Business Advisory Council at Montevallo University, and for three years was president of his State's Advisory Council for Career Education.

He is the author of several books and articles dealing with both business and the humanities. His book on Evelyn Waugh *(Masks, Modes, and Morals)* contains what some critics have judged the definitive treatment of *Brideshead Revisited*. In addition, he has written *The Eckleburg Perspective* and scores of articles and monographs. He has had the honor of having two of his speeches on education published in the "Congressional Record."

For five years, his radio program, a daily commentary on current events, was heard on over seventy stations in the Southeast and in California.

He is a member of several academic

fraternities and professional societies and is listed in *Who's Who in the South* and *Who's Who in Finance and Industry*. In 1985, he was one of five distinguished lecturers for the American Association of School Administrators and, in 1986, he was named The Distinguished Professor by AASA — National Academy for School Executives. His educational clients include a variety of educational organizations and school districts throughout the United States and abroad.

He has personally facilitated plans for over 50 school districts in the United States. He has directed plans for numerous intermediate units, state educational organizations, as well as national educational associations, such as AASA and NSDC.

Internationally, he is directing planning for the Ministry of Education in Bermuda and the Mediterranean Association of Independent Schools, and has presented programs for Near East/South Asia and the Inter-Regional Center of Colombia South America, as well as for various Canadian educational organizations. He is the director of NASE's Certification Institute in Strategic Planning, which has trained scores of internal facilitators for local districts.

He is married (for over twenty-nine years) to Judy Wallace; they have three daughters.